Author:
John, Colin

Title:
The Phantom Of Mary Hutchinson

Spousal Presence and Absence in the Poetry of Wordsworth

The Phantom of Mary Hutchinson: Spousal Presence and Absence in the Poetry of Wordsworth

Colin Neil John

A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the requirements for award of the degree of Master of Philosophy in the Faculty of Arts, School of Humanities.

November 2018

23,192 words

Abstract

William Wordsworth sought a relationship with a reading public, which was in a state of flux, a consequence of significant changes taking place in the structure of literary production and dissemination. The burden of 'philosopher poet,' placed upon him by Coleridge, exacerbated Wordsworth's sense of uncertainty regarding his position in the literary world. His earlier poetic output is therefore distinguished by a need for self-authorisation and self-affirmation, a desire to establish a reputation by creating unique, personal, literary credentials. This autobiographical imperative has been duly noted by critics. What has been given less attention is a countervailing desire to preserve the boundary between the public sphere of published poetry and the private domain of personal relations. Wordsworth is consistently aware that in authoring the self, he risks authoring the other, an act which jeopardises the valued sphere of private domesticity. This dilemma is experienced by Wordsworth as autobiographical anxiety, and it has a direct impact upon the way in which his poetry is presented. The results can include the self-silencing represented by his failure to publish *The Prelude* in his lifetime, and the silencing of others, such as the writing out of Dorothy from the published version of 'Nutting'. In the case of his wife, Mary Wordsworth, the poet adopts strategies to distance, obscure and displace personal intimacy in his published writing. His motives for doing so are protective rather than repressive, but the effect of these strategies is to create an initial impression of diminished affection. A closer analysis reveals a relationship given broader and deeper poetic shape than is usually recognised. It is also a relationship, which he can more readily acknowledge in his later work, as his autobiographical anxiety recedes in the face of public acceptance of his poetry and the resulting slackening of the autobiographical impulse.

I am grateful to Professor Andrew Bennett for giving me the opportunity to pursue a forty five year-old ambition to seek to bring some order into the chaos of my literary relationship with William Wordsworth.

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's *Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes* and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED…… DATE……..

Contents

1. Autobiographical Anxiety in *The Prelude* and 'Nutting' 7
2. Mary as Lover: Mary, Annette and a Tale of Two Countries 24
3. Mary as Bride: Mary, Dorothy and the Spousal Sister 40
4. Mary as Wife and Mother: Intimacy and 'Inmatecy' 48
5. Conclusion 68
6. Bibliography 71

'The ladies will save us,' said the old man; 'that is the best of them will – for I make a difference between them. Make up to a good one and marry her, and your life will become much more interesting.'[1]

'I, long before the blissful hour arrives,
Would chant, in lonely peace, the spousal verse
Of this great consummation'[2]

[1] Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady* (London: Penguin, 1971), p.12
[2] William Wordsworth, *The Excursion,* ed., Sally Bushell, James Butler and Michael C. Jaye (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), p. 39. References to Wordsworth's poems throughout are to the 'reading text' in the relevant volume of the Cornell series, unless otherwise stated.

1. Autobiographical Anxiety in *The Prelude* and 'Nutting'

Introduction

For many critics, Wordsworth is the epitome of the 'egotistical sublime', the silencer of other voices, particularly those of females. They call as chief witness for the prosecution, Coleridge, who said of his fellow poet: 'Of all the men I ever knew, Wordsworth has the least femineity [sic]in his mind. He is *all* man'.[3] Harold Bloom states that 'Wordsworth is almost too masculine a poet'[4]. Again, Marlon Ross categorises 'Romantic poeticising' as 'what some men do in order to reconfirm their capacity to influence the world in ways socio-historically determined as masculine……The Romantic poet…wants to claim even greater powers of mastery over the world'.[5] For other critics, however, Wordsworth is an uncertain and conflicted poet, who was robbed of parental support as a child and remained unsure of his place in the world for much of his life[6]. In this analysis, the poet struggled to create an authorial identity and readership in the face of resistance on the part of the reading public, amid fundamental changes taking place in the relationship between author and his or her reading audience.[7]

In what follows, I explore the extent to which, and the reasons why, one voice, in particular, is silenced, one presence made spectral, as an exemplum of an uncertainty at the heart of Wordsworth's writing: in seeking to define himself against the world and his readers, as both a man and a poet, Wordsworth also has to define himself in terms of those close to him. In the process of authoring the self, he must perforce author the other. This uncertainty I term the autobiographical dilemma. The response to it I term the anxiety of autobiography. I shall argue that the way in which Wordsworth's wife, Mary Hutchinson (Wordsworth), is presented in his poetry reveals an acute awareness, on the part of the poet, of a permeability between the public and private spheres. In

[3] Thomas Ashe, ed., *The Table Talk and Omniana of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1923), p.339
[4] Harold Bloom, *The Visionary Company* (London: Faber and Faber, 1961), p.183
[5] Marlon B. Ross, 'Romantic Quest and Conquest' in Anne K. Mellor ed., *Romanticism and Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), pp.29 and 32
[6] See, for example, Ashton Nichols, *The Revolutionary 'I'* (London: Macmillan Press, 1998), p.170
[7] See, for example, Jon P. Klancher, *The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1792 – 1832* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), especially chapter one.

creating his own authorial identity, he explores strategies to shore up the instability of this boundary between these public and private/domestic spheres. In so doing, he both celebrates and, at the same time, risks distancing the portrayal of domestic affection.

There is little doubt that Mary Hutchinson's relationship with Wordsworth has been overshadowed, in both biographical and critical circles, by the poet's relationship with his sister, Dorothy, and with his friend, Coleridge. It is also arguable that Mary has received less attention than Annette Vallon and Sara Hutchinson. Yet the relationship between Mary Wordsworth and her lover, and then husband, lasted over sixty years and produced five children and an extended family of grandchildren. They shared triumph and tragedy together, as well as decades of experiencing the small pleasures and vicissitudes of everyday life. Wordsworth is the writer of poetry forged from direct experience of the natural world. He is also, as both Judith Page and Ken Smith have noted, the poet of domesticity, as well as the poet of Nature[8].

The urge to the domestic in Wordsworth is a powerful force, and it was coloured by his own experience as a child. Initially provided with tangible shape by his experiences with his sister, as recounted in 'Home at Grasmere' (1800-1806), it is given impetus by his marriage to Mary Hutchinson in 1802. Thereafter, domesticity and the private sphere are central to his lived experience and to his poetry. As the keystone to this domesticity, Mary is a major facilitator of his poetry, not simply as an amanuensis, but as a liberator of the domestic imagination. Phantom-like, her presence moves in and out of poetry written over decades. The presence may be direct or indirect; it may contribute to tensions inherent in the poems concerned. Ultimately, however, Wordsworth is at pains to seek to demonstrate through his poetry the strength and stability that she has provided for him.

At the same time, this very act of recognition problematizes and potentially threatens the domestic environment by disturbing the boundary between public and private. In his book *Language*

[8] Judith Page, 'Wordsworth on Gender and Sexuality' and Ken Smith, 'Wordsworth's Domestic Life 1800-1850' both in Gravil and Robinson, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of William Wordsworth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015)

and Relationship in Wordsworth's Writing, in commenting that the poet wrote comparatively few poems about his immediate family, Michael Baron states that Wordsworth composed only 'a couple about Mary', his wife.[9] In her introduction to *Letters of Mary Wordsworth 1800 - 1855*, Mary Burton writes that poems about Mary, 'beginning with the Hawkshead days and extending to their later days, either directly addressed to her or referring to her, are more numerous than one would think. They deserve, I believe, a separate study.'[10] This difference in view can be attributed largely to the spectral nature of Mary's presence in a number of poems, as Wordsworth seeks to shore up the public/private boundary. Camille Paglia asserts that when Wordsworth is writing about Mary, her body is 'dematerialised and desexed. Reduced to matter.'[11] My aim is to demonstrate that throughout the poetry written about or addressed to Mary, there is evidence to show that this is not the case. The act of shoring up the public/private boundary may result in an apparent distancing of affection. However, it does not mean that the affection itself is felt less intensely or that it is entirely absent from these poems. What the poems *do* reveal is a series of poetical strategies designed to mitigate the anxiety aroused by the authoring of the other as a by-product of authoring the self.

In the analysis that follows, the remainder of this chapter explores the anxiety of autobiographical writing, firstly, in the context of *The Prelude,* as it affects the presentation of his relationship with Annette Vallon, and, secondly, in 'Nutting', as it affects the portrayal of his relationship with his sister, Dorothy. In subsequent chapters, the place of Mary in the poetry is examined in detail, with poems being grouped in accordance with Mary's position in Wordsworth's life, broadly in chronological sequence. My approach involves a close reading of key texts in order to highlight the poet's methods of dealing with this public/private uncertainty, and how these methods develop over his poetry-writing career. These readings take place alongside, where relevant, a review of both the biographical and critical literature in relation to the selected 'Mary' poems. These readings are not designed to be comprehensive, in that not all poems identified as possible 'Mary'

[9] Michael Baron, *Language and Relationship in Wordsworth's Writing* (London: Longman, 1995), p.150
[10] Mary Burton, ed., *Letters of Mary Wordsworth 1800 -1855* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. xxvii
[11] Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae* (London: Penguin, 1992), p.307

poems are discussed, owing to the potential number claimed by critics. In this regard, Mary Burton is closer to the truth than Michael Baron: there are far more than 'a couple' of poems in which Mary plays either a central or significant role. However, the focus on a smaller number of key texts, relating to a single, but central character in his life will help to delineate more clearly the nature of the public/private dilemma as experienced by Wordsworth, and how he, mostly consciously, sets out to come to terms with it poetically. Throughout the final three chapters, the focus is therefore on Mary. Other individuals, who, in both biography and critical texts, have loomed larger, are included only to shed light on the significance of Mary in the poetry.

Autobiographical Anxiety in *The Prelude* and 'Nutting'

Wordsworth's ambivalence in relation to publishing is expressed in a 1798 letter to James Tobin, where he declared (in relation to *The Borderers*):

> There is little need to advise me against publishing; it is a thing which I dread as much as death itself. This may serve as an example of the figure by rhetoricians called hyperbole, but privacy and quiet are my delight.[12]

With respect to *The Prelude* itself, Wordsworth makes his position clear forty years later in a letter to Thomas Talfourd in 1839:

> That book still exists in manuscript. Its publication has been prevented merely by the personal character of the subject.[13]

The compulsion to self-write[14], despite this reticence, has a historical, as well as a personal context. A number of literary historians has examined the relationship between literary creation and the markets for literature during the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth centuries, with a

[12] Chester Shaver, ed., *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Early Years, 1787-1805* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), p.211

[13] Alan Hill, ed., *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Later Years: Part III, 1835-1839* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p.680

[14] Sheila Kearns writes of the goal of autobiography as being 'to make oneself fully or immediately present both to oneself and to others.' (Sheila Kearns, *Coleridge, Wordsworth and Romantic Autobiography* (Madison: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1995), p.38. She then proceeds to examine the extent to which this is achieved as a goal in the context of *The Prelude.*

view to creating a better understanding of the autobiographical impulse that came to characterise the poetry of this period.[15]

The lapsing of the Licensing Act in 1695 provided a spur to the commercialisation of the print market during the following century. By diminishing (if not entirely doing away with) the power of the monopolistic Stationers' Register, the lapsing of the act led quite quickly to the creation of new publications, particularly in the field of newspapers, followed later by periodicals. Raymond Williams points out that the annual circulation of the daily press grew from 12.2 million in 1776 to 24.2 million by 1811, whilst the number of London morning papers increased from eight to fourteen in only six years after 1784[16]. Klancher has charted a similar expansion of the periodicals market.[17] The changes to the law on licensing led to a wider discussion about, and further legislative activity regarding copyright, the key debate being to what extent legally enforceable intellectual property should benefit the publisher or the author. As the eighteenth century progressed, the arguments taken up by the supporters of authorial copyright were not able to point to an author's ideas, which could not be copyrighted, but to the uniqueness of expression of authorial style. The implications for writers seeking to earn a living as part of an independent writing profession in the wake of a growing market for print were profound. As Hess says:

> Wordsworth participated in the general transition from an old 'status' model of professionalism, based on networks of social patronage and inherited status, to a new 'occupational' model based on experience, individual talents and credentials, which opened the professions as a field for the fulfilment of individual ambition[18].

Equally important was the break-up of the perceived single homogeneous reading public. This trend emerged as the eighteenth century progressed, but was given additional impetus by the French Revolution, the reaction to which was both fractious and fractured in the United Kingdom.[19] The focus began to shift to the individual reader and the privatisation of reading. The increasing size

[15] In this analysis, I follow primarily Klancher, *The Making of English Reading Audiences*, Scott Hess, *Authoring the Self* (unpublished doctoral thesis, Harvard University, 2000) and Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (London: Pelican, 1965)
[16] Williams, p.207
[17] Klancher, pp.26-46
[18] Hess, p.413
[19] Klancher, pp.26-31

and complexity of the reading public created both opportunities and threats for writers such as Wordsworth and other first generation Romantics. The opportunities presented by the possibility of becoming a self-financing author, free from the network of patronage, on which earlier writers had depended, was threatened by a growing uncertainty as to the nature of the reading public, to which the writer was seeking to appeal[20]. Hess points out that 'with the expansion and diversification of readership, the Romantics were the last generation that would still harbour the idea of a personal and intimate connection with their readers, and the first generation to be radically uncertain of their audience'[21]. In replacing the intimate world of patronage with the large-scale, dynamic world of the print consumer public, Wordsworth was forced to consider this new relationship and how to respond to it. The new relationship was, at the same time, both anonymous and personal. Authors writing at the end of the eighteenth century, and particularly Wordsworth, who like Coleridge, had absented himself from the commercial publishing centre of London in order to live in the West Country, and subsequently, the Lake District, had little direct relationship with their readers, other than via their writing. As Klancher states: 'Readerships were no longer waiting to be discovered and acculturated; they could not be colonised. They must, as Coleridge would come to understand in the profoundest way, be produced.'[22] The reaction of Wordsworth is to create the poet 'Wordsworth' in his writing, thereby establishing both his unique, autobiographical and lyric style and his authority as a professional writer.

As part of establishing his professional authorial identity and the authority that went with it, Wordsworth sought through his writing to grapple with the aesthetic repercussions of the changing nature of this relationship between author and reader. M. H. Abrams has charted the shift in focus

[20] Wordsworth, while a forceful advocate of the importance of the independent writer, was the recipient of significant acts of kindness from a number of people in the first half of his life, including Raisley Calvert, the Pinneys, Sir George Beaumont and the younger Lord Lonsdale. Wordsworth's awareness of this conflict can be seen in his correspondence with his benefactors, although the various acts of generosity were openly acknowledged (see, for example, Shaver, ed., *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, pp.406-10)

[21] Hess, p.72

[22] Klancher, p.38. Wordsworth acknowledged this insight in the 1807 'Essay Supplementary to the Preface,' where he claims that 'every author, as far as he is great and at the same time *original,* has had the task of *creating* the taste by which he is to be enjoyed'. *Wordsworth Poetical Works* eds., Thomas Hutchinson and Ernest de Selincourt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p.750

during the eighteenth century from 'mimetic' and 'pragmatic' theories of art to 'expressive theories'.[23] The proliferation of newspapers, periodicals and journals was splintering the reading public into smaller, separate and more diverse audiences, which, in turn, threatened the cultural consensus. At the same time, reading was also becoming an increasingly solitary act, as literary works were bought in larger numbers or borrowed from commercial lending libraries. The rise of the concept of 'taste,' concentrated on individual reception and the working of the individual mind,[24] exacerbated this process of fragmentation. By the end of the century, the reader had largely become a consumer rather than a 'reciprocal producer of common discourse'.[25] This trend mirrored that of the idea of the author writing alone and detached from his audience, a by-product of the increased opportunities for making an independent living as an author.[26] It was a way of thinking, 'in which the artist himself becomes the major element generating both the artistic product and the criteria by which it is to be judged'.[27] The creation of meaning from the interaction of individual reader and individual author also derives directly from the notion of the uniqueness of expression of style of the writer, which, as set out above, was given impetus by the debate about and emergence of authorial copyright. Shelley's view, expressed in the *Defence of Poetry* that 'a poet is a nightingale, who sits in darkness and sings to cheer its own solitude with sweet sounds; his auditors are as men entranced by the melody of an unseen musician',[28] sums up both the sense of distance between writer and audience, the unique personal voice of the writer and the process of reception ('entranced') as the key aspects of literary experience.

However, Wordsworth was also able to claim that through this essentially private discourse between an autonomous author giving expression to his self-sufficient power of imagination, and the independent reader, the latter was also able, through this discourse, to establish both an

[23] M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), especially chapter 1.
[24] See Hess, pp 66-7
[25] Hess, p. 68
[26] See, for example, Thomas Gray, 'Elegy written in a Country Churchyard': 'The Plow-man homeward plods his weary Way/And leaves the World to Darkness and to me' (lines 3-4, first edition text)
[27] Abrams, p. 22
[28] P. B. Shelley, *The Complete Works of Shelley,* ed., Roger Ingpen and Walter Peck (NY: Gordian Press, 1965), vol. 7 p.116. Quoted in Hess p.491

independent sense of identity and a social identification with others. This relationship is reflected in Book 2 of *The Prelude,* where he writes of childhood boating adventures:

> But, ere the fall
> Of night, when in our pinnace we returned
> Over the dusky lake, and to the beach
> Of some small island steered our course with one,
> The Minstrel of our Troop, and left him there,
> And rowed off gently, while he blew his flute
> Alone upon the rock-oh, then, the calm
> And dead still water lay upon my mind
> Even with a weight of pleasure, and the sky,
> Never before so beautiful, sank down
> Into my heart, and held me like a dream.
> Thus daily were my sympathies enlarged (1805:2:170-181)

The 'minstrel' is isolated on the island, but is still able to communicate unseen with the other boys in the boat, such that Wordsworth, at least, is able to experience the growth of his own imaginative faculties. As he says in the 1800 Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*: 'It has therefore appeared to me that to endeavour to produce or enlarge this capability [of sympathetic feeling] is one of the best services in which, at any period, a Writer can be engaged.'[29] This essentially educative view of the artist as the tutor of taste through the exercise of the individual imagination leads naturally to the idea of poet as teacher. As he says in a letter to George Beaumont in 1808: 'Every great Poet is a Teacher: I wish either to be considered as a Teacher, or as nothing'.[30] However, in order to fulfil this teacher function, the poet needs to have demonstrated his professional authority, which he does by authoring and authorising the self in his poetry. Thus, the autobiography of poetic self-representation, the expanding, but splintering print market and the movement towards the creation of a professional literary identity are all intertwined.

The emergence of this autobiographical imperative was given additional impetus in the early versions of *The Prelude* (1799, 1804 and 1805) by the task, handed to Wordsworth, by Coleridge, of writing *The Recluse.* Faced with a task to which he feared he was not intellectually suited,

[29] Gamer and Porter ed., *Lyrical Ballads 1798 and 1800: Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth* (Toronto: Broadview Press, 2008), p.177
[30] Mary Moorman ed., *Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Middle Years: Part I, 1806-1811* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p.195

Wordsworth writes *The Prelude* to try to convince himself that he has both the intellectual and imaginative resources to commit to the project[31]. The result is nine thousand lines of autobiographical poetry setting out 'the Growth of a Poet's Mind', which serves the notional double function of creating and supporting a professional authorial identity for the poet's reading audience ('Wordsworth' the poet) and a personal self-authorising identity for the addressee of the poem (Wordsworth the poet that Coleridge wants me to be[32]). Wordsworth writes *The Prelude* to provide himself with the reassurance he needs for the larger task that has been laid out for him. It is in this sense that Nichols is able to say of the 1799 Prelude: 'To write a self is to become a self. To write a self is also to save that self'.[33]

However, this double function is notional only, because, whilst the writing of *the Prelude* in its first final form (1805) does at least temporarily provide Wordsworth with the psychological confidence that he can meet Coleridge's requirements, he will not publish the poem before his death. This is primarily because the force of the autobiographical imperative is set against a general sense of autobiographical anxiety. Whilst Wordsworth wrote on a number of occasions that *The Prelude* would not be published until *The Recluse* was finished, because he came to see it as part of the wider *Recluse* architecture[34], it is also noticeable that the architecture envisaged a three part *Recluse*, with two parts being 'chiefly of meditations in the Author's own Person', while in the published part, *The Excursion*, 'the intervention of characters speaking is employed, and something of a dramatic form adopted'.[35] The two remaining parts were therefore to be more autobiographical in nature. These are the parts that are either not written, or, if partially written, as in *Home at Grasmere*, remain unpublished.

Wordsworth's poetry generally, but particularly *The Prelude*, therefore represents a battleground between the autobiographical imperative and autobiographical anxiety. Writing

[31] See, particularly, the Preface to *The Excursion,* ed., Bushell, Butler and Jaye (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 2007), p.38. Also, Shaver, ed., *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth,* p.454
[32] See Ashton Nichols, *The Revolutionary 'I'*, p.21
[33] Ibid. p.76
[34] Again, see the Preface to *The Excursion,* ed., Bushell, Butler and Jaye, p.38
[35] ibid. p. 39

strategies employed for the reconciliation of these two emotional forces include the draconian silencing of the self and others, through non-publication (too much William Wordsworth and, by implication, too much exposure for those close to me), but also include displacement, elision, revisitings and the elliptical voice. These strategies are considered in what follows.

However, it should be noted that even in the general silencing of the self that is inherent in *The Prelude*, Wordsworth, if he can satisfy himself that the boundary between public and private worlds can be maintained, is prepared to take material from *The Prelude* and publish it elsewhere in his canon. Perhaps the best example of this is the material which became 'Vaudracour and Julia', published in 1820, as part of the River Duddon collection, but which originally featured as over three hundred lines from Book 9 of the 1805 Prelude, and which did not reappear in the 1850 published version. These lines (555-934) and the story they encapsulate of a young couple who meet in France, fall in love and give birth to an illegitimate child, appear at precisely the point in *The Prelude* narrative, when Wordsworth met Annette Vallon, with whom he had an illegitimate child, Caroline. On the face of it, such a transfer of material looks like a triumph of the autobiographical imperative over autobiographical anxiety, since it suggests a willingness to bring an account of Wordsworth's own lived experience into the public arena. However, Wordsworth is at pains to ensure that the boundary between public and private arenas remains intact. He seeks to achieve this in a number of ways.

Firstly, he makes it clear in the 1805 Prelude that he had been told the story by Michel Beaupuy, as an example of the cruelty of the *ancien regime.* In turn, the story could be traced back to:

> the mouth of a French lady, who had been an eye-and-ear witness of all that was done and said. The facts are true; no invention as to these has been exercised, as none was needed[36].

In making this statement, Wordsworth encourages a connection to be made with Helen Maria Williams' *Letters From France*, published in 1790, and, in particular, the story of the du Fosse family,

[36] See Adam Komisaruk, 'Private Persons: Class and the Construction of Sexuality in British Romanticism' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of California Los Angeles, 1998), pp.70-73 and Emile Legouis*, William Wordsworth and Annette Vallon* (London: J & M Dent, 1922), pp. 15-16.

in which Baron du Fosse dooms the liaison between his son and Monique Coquerel, a woman of 'low birth', who has given birth to their baby girl. There is effectively a double displacement here, with the Annette, Caroline, Wordsworth (all alive) narrative, being displaced by the Vaudracour (alive), Julia (alive) and baby (dead) story via the Augustin Fosse, Monique, daughter (all alive) story. This double displacement, together with the differing numbers of survivors, eases Wordsworth's autobiographical anxiety in respect of Annette and Caroline, as well as himself. To this can be added that:

> There existed between Wordsworth and Annette no difference of caste. The surgeon's daughter was as good as the son of the Earl of Lonsdale's steward. There was no violence used in their case; no 'lettre du cachet', murder, prison, convent, nor tragic ending.[37]

The passage of time also helps to reduce autobiographical anxiety. The original events involving Wordsworth and Annette took place during 1792. By the time they were recreated in the 1805 Prelude, thirteen years had passed. With the publication of 'Vaudracour and Julia' as a separate poem in 1820, a total of twenty eight years separated the events and their 'public' re-presentation.

Finally, and despite brief references to the story remaining in Book 9 of the 1850 published version of *The Prelude*, the extraction of the lines from the highly autobiographical 'Growth of a Poet's Mind' and their placement as a separate poem in a collection that includes other romance pieces such as 'Lament of Mary Queen of Scots' and 'Artegal and Elidure' creates the autobiographical distance, which Wordsworth would have deemed necessary for the maintenance of the boundary between his public and private worlds.

In the meantime, *The Prelude*, together with *Home at Grasmere*, remained a topic of conversation only for Wordsworth's domestic circle. It is ironic that within a few months of the publication of 'Vaudracour and Julia,' Wordsworth, Dorothy and Mary were strolling in the Jardin des Plantes in Paris with Annette, Caroline, her husband and their two children, with Caroline, throughout their visit, addressing the poet openly as 'father'. But this was Paris in 1820, and

[37] Legouis, *William Wordsworth and Annette Vallon*, p.15

essentially, a private world, reported only in private correspondence, and even then, only tangentially.[38] No record of the meetings is found in the public arena of Wordsworth's published poetry. Autobiographical anxiety creates a characteristic silence.

A more peripheral, but nevertheless powerful example of autobiographical anxiety occasioned by potential *Prelude* material can be found in 'Nutting'*,* published in the 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads.* Composed during the bleak and isolating Goslar winter of 1798/9, the published version consists of 54 lines focused almost entirely on the young Wordsworth, lines written at the same time as the early episodes for *The Prelude,* but which, according to *The Fenwick Notes,* 'were struck out as not wanted there'.[39] However, manuscripts related to 'Nutting' (principally DCMS 15 and 16) reveal a much knottier, more complex set of drafts, over double the length of the published version, in which Wordsworth develops his theme of respect for Nature in the context of not one, but two transgressions, one past and one present. The three-line coda to the published poem gives only the merest hint of this double structure.

At the core of the DCMS 15 draft (and of the final poem, but not of the DCMS 16 draft) is the scene of Wordsworth's boyhood desecration of the hazel grove, described in language that is powerfully sexually charged. In common with other boyhood scenes, such as the stealing of the boat and from the traps laid by others, a sense of guilt is at the heart of the experience, which in typical Wordsworthian fashion, seems to both emerge from the boy and be imposed on him by Nature:

> I felt a sense of pain when I beheld
> The silent trees and the intruding sky (50-51 published poem)

A key difference is that in the published version there is only one active presence, whereas in DCMS 15 there are two. The initial description of the experiences of the boy in the published version is typical of the early books of *The Prelude,* but the invocation of the last three lines introduces a direct

[38] See Mary Wordsworth's 'Continental Journal' DCMS 92 (Dove Cottage Archive), entry for 2nd October 1820. The fullest account of the meeting can be found in Henry Crabb Robinson: *On Books and Their Writers,* ed., Edith Morley (London: J.M. Dent, 1938), vol. 1 p.248 : 'I repaired to Rue Charlot and was introduced to Mrs. Baudouin, a mild, amiable little woman in appearance. I liked everything about her except that she called Wordsworth 'father', which I thought indelicate.'

[39] James Butler and Karen Green, ed., *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems 1797-1800* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), p.391

admonishment of another, which is not typical. Nevertheless this persona is a spectral, passive recipient of the poet's exhortation, which, in itself, is based on his past personal experience. The published work and DCMS 15 address a 'dearest maiden', but DCMS 16 addresses the woman as 'Lucy':

Thou, Lucy, art a maiden 'inland bred'[40] (DCMS 16: 6)

She therefore joins the 'Lucy' persona(e) being created at the same time during the Goslar period, with the important distinction that she is addressed in the present tense[41] and is at least initially active in a way that her Goslar 'sibling(s)' are not. Her presence allows Wordsworth to explore sexuality in a broader manner than in the published version, which in itself is not just a portrayal of male sexual aggression against the defenceless female. In this published version, Wordsworth adopts what might be termed both Miltonic and Spenserean approaches to sexuality.[42] Satan's penetrating of Eden in *Paradise Lost* exemplifies the masculine sublime model of aggression/female submission criticised by feminist critics and symbolised in 'Nutting' by the young poet forcing his way into 'one dear nook/ Unvisited,' where the 'hazels rose/Tall and erect'. However, there is also a Spenserean dimension to the poem, with its emphasis on voluptuousness and a 'heart (which) luxuriates with indifferent things'. On this reading, the young Wordsworth is Sir Guyon and the hazel grove becomes a 'Bower of Bliss', where sexuality is repressed via the destruction of the grove. This, in turn, allows the boy to enter into manhood as a 'chivalric knight,'[43] who is now in a position to provide instruction to the 'dearest maiden'/'Lucy'.

In the drafts, Wordsworth brings further complexity to the already multi-faceted exploration of sexuality by utilising the double structure of past and present transgression on the part of both the young poet, as already described in the published version, and the Lucy persona. The DCMS 15 and 16 versions begin not with male, but with female violence, as Lucy 'crash(es)' through the hazel

[40] Butler and Green p.305
[41] Lucy is addressed briefly in the deleted stanza of 'Strange Fits of Passion', but this is distanced by the past tense.
[42] See Tim Fulford, *Romanticism and Masculinity* (London: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 189-196
[43] Ibid. p.190

grove. The poles of past/ present and male/female allow a richness of interpretation not available to the published version. Initially the poet is shocked not only at Lucy's violence, but also the apparent switching of the conventional male/female roles:

> But had I met thee now with that keen look
> Half cruel in its eagerness, thy cheek
> Thus rich with a tempestuous bloom, in truth
> I might have half believed that I had pass'd
> A houseless being in a human shape,
> An enemy of nature (DCMS 15: 10-15)

DCMS 16 has 'flushed with a tempestuous bloom', which is even more suggestive of Lucy as sensually aroused. The reconfiguring of gender roles seems to arise at least partly from the grove itself, with its combined presence of male and female sexual organs. The exploration of sexual aggression leads in DCMS 16 to the quotations from and therefore the comparison with 'As You Like It', and Orlando as a similar 'enemy of nature' in the Forest of Arden, a man, who has to be tutored by Rosalind before the Shakespearean universe can regain its traditional sense of order[44]. The literary analogy helps to deepen meaning, but also to distance and 'place' the shock of Lucy's behaviour.

Nevertheless, violence has emanated from both male and female. It is at this point that the Lucy of the 'Nutting' draft comes close to joining the fate of her Goslar 'sibling(s)'. In seeking to restrain her, the poet moves to reduce her to stillness in the cause of protecting Nature and repairing the natural order:

> Come rest on this light bed of purple heath
> And let me see thee sink into a dream
> Of gentle thoughts. (DCMS 15: 17-19)

This order, though, is not predicated only on feminine passivity. The poet, too, has had to learn to rein in his desires, his sense of the masculine sublime, in order that a bridge can be built between nature and humanity in all its gender differences. However, notwithstanding Wordsworth's attempts

[44] DCMS 16 has 'Thou, Lucy, art a maiden ''inland bred''/ And thou hast known ''some nurture'''. This compares with *As You Like It* (2.vii.96): '…yet am I inland bred,/ And know some nurture.'

to bring sexual harmony back to the world, Lucy, although a creature of the poet's imagination, and even as a disruptor of the Wordsworthian universe and a transgressor of gender roles, cannot quite be stilled. The very energy and intensity of her creation resists silence, despite distancing devices such as the literary allusions to Shakespeare and Spenser, and the undermining self-irony of the young Wordsworth's dress sense. In DCMS 15 he has entered and charted regions of sexual conflict, but he was not prepared to publish the poetry that charted them. In the drafts contained in DCMS 15 and 16, there is a richer and more resonant potential poem of sexuality than the poem published as 'Nutting' in 1800. However, the exploration of female sexuality in the context of the Lucy persona led the poet to experience autobiographical anxiety. He understood that the subject matter of the longer 'Nutting', in conjunction with the unexplained persona of Lucy and the timing of the composition in Goslar, might have led to discussions about the identity of Lucy (and he has been proved resoundingly correct about this: Dorothy has been consistently identified with Lucy over the decades.) In the 'Lucy' poems he was able to drain the presence out of the Lucy persona through a verbal economy, which is almost akin to gesture in its sparseness bordering on silence. This was not possible, given the vitality of Lucy as presented in the longer 'Nutting'. Autobiographical anxiety therefore leads to the achievement of that characteristic silence, as Lucy is literally written out of the poem. Wordsworth himself becomes, once more, effectively the sole subject of his verse. The emotional wellspring for this, however, is not, principally, egotism. He recognises both the quality of the poetry and the importance of the subject, but he is not prepared to incorporate a potentially better poem into his oeuvre, if it would potentially discomfort himself, and more importantly, his sister.

The 'Nutting' drafts also reveal and explore one further important contrast in the exploration of attitudes to the natural world. DCMS 15 contains the bulk of the first twelve lines of a Goslar fragment known as 'I would not strike a flower'[45]. These lines set up a brief 'alternative

[45] Butler and Green, ed., *'Lyrical Ballads' and Other Poems* p.312

world,' in which the poet has not been a violator of nature, and are, therefore, in their self-protective fashion, evidence of autobiographical anxiety in action:

> If from the wantonness in which we play……
> It chanc'd that I ungently used a tuft
> Of meadow-lilies, or had snapp'd the stem
> Of foxglove bending o'er his native rill,
> I should be loth to pass along my way
> With unreprov'd indifference (3-11)

The incorporation of these lines in DCMS 15 stops at line 12, but at line 23 of the fragment, these lines appear:

> But some there are, and such as I have known
> Far happier, chiefly one beloved maid:
> For she is Nature's inmate, and her heart
> Is everywhere, even the unnoticed heath
> That o'er the mountain spreads its prodigal bells
> Lives in her love; friends also more than one
> Are hers who feed among the woods and hills
> A kindred joy. (23-30)

These lines are a touchstone, and probably the genesis of the presentation of Mary in *The Prelude.*[46] However, it is important to note that their significance here is potentially to allow Wordsworth to distinguish between the destructive 'Lucy' in DCMS 15 and the figure of Mary, who is a true *inmate* of nature, a characteristic Wordsworthian word, which Sykes-Davies defines as 'an intimate inhabitant of a household, either kith and kin, or close friend'.[47] In identifying her as an intimate inhabitant of nature, the poet emphasises the naturalness and serenity of her affection for all things animate and inanimate. In this regard, she is like the alternative Wordsworth and the antithesis of Lucy 'flushed with a tempestuous bloom' (DCMS 16 line 10). It is this image of Mary that Wordsworth brings into *The Prelude,* particularly in the strikingly similar passage in Book 11 (1805):

> For she was Nature's inmate. Her the birds
> And every flower she met with, could they but

[46] The connection between these lines and passages from *The Prelude* has been made by Sykes-Davies. See Hugh Sykes-Davies, *Wordsworth and the Worth of Words* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 266. He also coined the term 'inmatecy' used at page 48 below (see Part V of the same work).
[47] Ibid. p.272

Have known her, would have loved; methought such charm
Of sweetness did her presence breathe around
That all the trees and all the silent hills,
And every thing she looked on, should have had
An intimation how she bore herself
Towards them and to all creatures. (1805: 11: 214–221)

The passage again emphasises the respectful empathy of a woman completely in tune with the natural world, unlike the nemesis of nature represented by the Lucy persona. However, it lacks the context that the longer 'Nutting' drafts provide. That context cannot be made available because of the autobiographical dilemma, but this Mary can be brought into *the Prelude* (detached from the Lucy aspects of the 'Nutting' drafts and unnamed), acknowledged and praised in the psychological comfort of the ideal reading public represented by the Grasmere circle, whose members are both listeners/readers and presences in the poem:

Another maid there was, who also shed
A gladness o'er that season, then to me,
By her exulting outside look of youth
And placid under-countenance, first endeared;
That other spirit, Coleridge! Who is now
So near to us, that meek confiding heart,
So reverenced by us both. (1805: 6: 224-230).

Wordsworth stresses the continuity of a relationship that has already extended from adolescence ('that season') to marriage and beyond. Her 'placid' demeanour and 'meek, confiding heart' are constants in his life and can be acknowledged openly in the context of this unpublished verse. The following chapters explore the ways in which Wordsworth seeks to place Mary within his *published* poetry against the backdrop of the conflict between the autobiographical impulse and the anxiety, which the autobiographical dilemma creates.

2. Mary as Lover: Mary, Annette and a Tale of two Countries

Both Mary Hutchinson and Wordsworth suffered dislocated childhoods through the early deaths of both parents. Ann Wordsworth died in 1778 and her husband, John, five years later. Mary's mother died in childbirth in 1783 and her husband, also John, two years later in 1785. In many ways, Mary suffered less from these traumas, as she was more fortunate in the relationships she was able to forge with the wider Hutchinson and Monkhouse families[48]. Wordsworth undoubtedly got on better with his Uncle Richard at Whitehaven than he did with his other guardian, Uncle Kit[49]. However, he had the benefit of spending significant periods of time away at Hawkshead School, where Ann Tyson became effectively a surrogate mother, and where he had considerable freedom to explore the surrounding countryside[50].

The person who arguably suffered most from parental loss was Dorothy, who although happy with her relations in Halifax, was cut off from her brothers for nine years following the break-up of the family. The happiness of the siblings' brief reunion at the Cooksons in the summer of 1787 was tempered on Dorothy's part by the coldness of the relationship with her relatives[51]. The brief coming together of the Wordsworth children at this time is also important, as it allowed Wordsworth and Mary to meet again, potentially for the first time since early childhood, when Dorothy and Mary had been school friends at Ann Birkhead's Dame School[52]. They were able to forge deeper bonds via the Cowper household in Penrith, where John Cowper was vicar. Wordsworth's uncle, William Cookson, and Mary's uncle, William Monkhouse, had both married daughters of John and Mary Cowper, Dorothy and Ann respectively[53].

The circumstances surrounding Wordsworth's becoming re-acquainted at the same time with both his sister and her friend after a nine year gap may have contributed to their closeness as a

[48] See Mary Wordsworth, 'Transcripts from Scraps' (DCMS 167) Dove Cottage Archive
[49] See Mary Moorman, *William Wordsworth, A Biography: The Early Years, 1770-1803* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957), pp 13 and 19
[50] Ibid. pp. 29-32
[51] Ibid. p.73
[52] Ibid. p.15
[53] For comment on this early period in Wordsworth's life, see also Stephen Gill, *William Wordsworth A Life* (Oxford: University Press, 1990), pp.13-36

trio at this time, which in turn, set the pattern for what happened later. In any event, Wordsworth celebrates this period with Dorothy and Mary in Book 11 of *The Prelude (1805):*

> ……..When, in a blessed season
> With those two dear ones, to my heart so dear
> When in the blessed time of early love, (1805: 11: 316-318)

although by the time of Wordsworth's revision of *The Prelude* text in 1818-1820 (the C-stage Text)[54], these lines had become :

> ……When in the blessed hours
> Of early love, alone, or with the maid
> To whom were breathed my first fond vows (C-Stage: 11: 316-318)

And by the time of the 1850 version, they had been changed again to:

> ……When in the blessed hours
> Of early love, the loved one at my side (1850: 12: 261-262)

These changes, and especially the writing out of Dorothy, reflect a particular aspect of the autobiographical dilemma involving Dorothy and Mary, which is considered further in Chapter 3.

The trio of poet/sister/maid outlined above, might, at one stage, have involved Annette Vallon, rather than Mary. As indicated above, Annette and Wordsworth knew each other for a little under a year in 1791/2, when he was twenty one and she was twenty five. Their child, Anne-Caroline, was baptised in Orleans Cathedral on 15th December 1792. The subsequent war between England and France kept them apart until the Peace of Amiens in 1802. However, an erratic exchange of letters did take place, in which Annette pleaded for Wordsworth to come back to France and marry her as soon as he could[55]. The tripartite domestic idyll (expanded by Caroline) is expressed in one of Annette's letters (from 1793):

> When you are surrounded by your sister, your wife, your daughter, who all only breathe for you, we will have only one feeling, one heart, one soul, and everything is put on hold until I am with my dear William.[56]

---

[54] *The Thirteen Book Prelude Volume 2* ed. Mark Reed (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991)
[55] See Gill, *William Wordsworth A Life,* pp.65-66
[56] Quoted in Jonathan Wordsworth, 'My Dearest Love: The Letters of William and Mary Wordsworth, 1810' in *The Wordsworth Circle*, Fall 1981 (Proquest/ New York University: Periodicals Archive Online, 2006) p.210 (my translation)

The strength of this desire to be part of the poet's domestic arrangements is matched by the intensity of Dorothy's feelings. The separation of the Wordsworth children, and particularly Dorothy's detachment from her brothers, leads her to articulate a desire to live with William. In a letter to Jane Pollard,[57] written in July 1793, she says:

> I see my Brother fired with the idea of leading his sister to such a retreat as Fancy ever ready at our call hastens to assist us in painting.

This notion of a self-contained, secluded domestic environment has a resonance throughout Wordsworth's poetry and is considered further below.

The idea of the 'retreat' is at the centre of 'Septimi Gades', an unfinished, and therefore, unpublished poem, based on an ode of Horace, and whose date of composition is unclear. The poem is included in the 'Windy Brow' notebook of the Spring and early Summer of 1794 (DCMS 10), but it is included as a fair copy, thereby leaving the possibility that it was composed at an earlier date. Jonathan Wordsworth dates it to 1790 or 1791, and views it as a pre-Annette poem, because of the reference to Mary in a context of shared domesticity.[58]

> Yes Mary to some lowly door
> In that delicious spot obscure
> Our happy feet shall tend (67-69)

The editors of the Cornell Wordsworth regard it as being composed in 1794 and refer to Dorothy's letter to Jane Pollard on 21 April 1794[59], in which she expresses delight at the demeanour and behaviour of the locals at Windy Brow, which they view as being reflected in the lines from the poem, which do not have an equivalent in the original:

> There Temperance and Truth abide
> And Toil with Leisure at his side
> And Chearfulness and Health (45-48)

[57] Shaver, *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth,* p.97
[58] Jonathan Wordsworth, 'My Dearest Love', p.273
[59] Shaver, p.114

However, the heavy, stately personification here does not mesh particularly well with the spontaneous pleasure expressed by Dorothy in her letter. Also there are many other lines that do not reflect the original. The poem, at 78 lines (and unfinished) versus the 24 lines of the original, is much more than a free translation. There is a nod to the structural device of the geography of two potential homes, and there is the close resemblance of the final line, 'your bard and friend'[60] and 'Thy poet and thy friend' (line 72). There is also use within the text of Classical/Augustan pastoral description: 'finny myriads' (line 37), 'parting Phoebus' (line 49), 'vivid meads' (line 43). At its core, the piece is more in the nature of an occasion for a poem on secluded domestic happiness. In this sense, it is true to its source, and, indeed, to other examples of the rural retreat in poems such as the *Vale of Esthwaite* and 'Anacreon Imitated'.

What is different is the urgent, unsettling, even incoherent tone of the opening of the poem, which goes significantly beyond the tenor of the original:

> Oh thou whose fixed bewildered eye
> In strange and dreary vacancy
> Of tenderness severe,
> With fear unnamed my bosom chilled
> While thus thy farewell accents thrilled,
> Or seemed to thrill mine ear (1-6)

Jonathan Wordsworth does not address these lines. Landon and Curtis, reflecting their assumed dating of composition, suggest that they reflect the uncertainty that Dorothy and Wordsworth are about to face with the impending end of the Windy Brow interlude. Despite the allusion to Mary at line 70, they consider the autobiographical context to relate to Dorothy.

The poem is interesting in that, like *The Prelude,* it was unpublished during the poet's lifetime, but unlike that poem, it was not subject to significant long-term revision. The poem also has a sense of completeness as it stands and therefore provides insight into the techniques that Wordsworth adopts when facing the permeability of the private/public boundary. These techniques

[60] Horace, *The Odes and Carmen Saeculare of Horace* (translated by John Conington) (London: George Bell and Sons, 1882)

may be described as 'spontaneous', as they are not subject to the further Wordsworthian scrutiny that would inevitably apply if publication were imminent. Whatever the arguments about the date of composition, it is difficult to ignore the appearance of the name, 'Mary', in the poem, notwithstanding the poet's use of the name in the clearly fictitious *The Greyhound Ballad* and *The Three Graves,* both written in 1796, and his general fondness for the name[61]. Whether the date of composition is 1791 or 1794, there is no cogent argument to deny Mary's presence in the poem. What Wordsworth does with that presence is to 'contain' it and distance it with the Horatian ode format, as well as by use of the poetic traditions of Pre-Romantic verse, particularly the Augustan diction. References to Milton and the Bible[62] ('No separate path our lives shall know/But where thou goest I will go/And there my bones shall rest') further serve to 'place' any autobiographical features in a wider literary context. It is as if the emotional outburst of the first stanza is immediately absorbed into the calm, classical landscape. The image of the cottage half-seen, half-hidden in the mist is an apt analogy for the poeticised experience, perfectly positioned on the boundary between the public and private spheres:

> Methinks that morning scene displays
> A Lovely emblem of our days
> Unobvious and serene.
> So shall our still lives half betrayed
> Shew charms more touching from their shade
> Though veiled yet not unseen. (58-66)

In portraying this hidden intimacy, this stanza, along with other lines, achieves a quality approaching that of Wordsworth's lyric maturity[63], but in so doing, it also drains the individuality from Mary, whilst retaining a clearly expressed affection:

> Love with his tenderest kiss shall dry
> Thy human tear (76-77)

[61] Wordsworth, William, *Early Poems and Fragments 1785-1797*, ed., Carol Landon and Jared Curtis (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), p.760
[62] See Lucy Newlyn, 'The Wordsworths' Poetics of Hospitality,' in *Essays in Criticism*, 66 (2016), p.28
[63] Compare, for example, 'that morning scene displays/A lovely emblem of our days/Unobvious and serene' with 'The happy idleness of that sweet morn/With all its lovely images' ('Point Rash Judgment', lines 68-69)

The cottage ('a little nest') and Mary, at once both individual and strongly felt, and emblematic, in typically Wordsworthian fashion, gain a symbolic quality that looks towards the 'Lucy' poems[64].

The next 'little nest' was situated in Dorset, where Wordsworth and Dorothy took up residence at Racedown in September 1795. Mary visited the house for an extended stay in the Spring of 1797. Whilst there can be no certainty as regards the status of the relationship at this time, Dorothy makes it clear that Mary fitted seamlessly into the household, as her letter to Jane Marshall makes clear:

> You perhaps have heard that my friend Mary Hutchinson is staying with me; she is one of the best girls in the world and we are as happy as human beings can be.[65]

A sense of how matters were developing may be found in a reference to this visit contained in one of the so-called love letters exchanged between Wordsworth and Mary in 1810 and 1812, during two periods of separation[66]. Wordsworth had accompanied Mary on her way home in June 1797 at the end of her stay, and in the letter, reminiscing on that journey, he indulges in a fantasy, where:

> You would have walked on Northwards with me at your side, till, unable to part from each other, we might have come in sight of those hills which skirt the road for so many miles, and thus continuing our journey…I fancied that we should have been so deeply into each other's hearts,…. that we should have braved the world and parted no more[67].

The letter continues:

> Under that tree…. we might have rested, of that stream might have drank (sic), in that thicket we might have hidden ourselves from the sun, and from the eyes of the passenger; and thus did I feed on the thought of bliss that might have been.

The private correspondence highlighted here provides an indication of the physical nature of the relationship, which was to emerge in their married years, and which continued to be subject to the

---

[64] For further discussion on the topic of the status of individuals in Wordsworth's poetry, see John Jones, *The Egotistical Sublime* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1970), pp 61-75, where Jones discusses the relationship in Wordsworth between solitude and relationship and the Wordsworthian solitary that moves at the border between them. Also Roger Murray, 'The Blending of Perception' (University of Iowa, unpublished doctoral thesis, 1965), p.143, where Murray states that Wordsworthian language 'fuses thought and thing...[which]…is Wordsworth's means for merging the two contexts comprised of the externalities of man and nature'.

[65] Shaver, *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, p.181

[66] For a further discussion of these letters, see chapter 4 below.

[67] Beth Darlington ed., *The Love Letters of Wiliam and Mary Wordsworth* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1981), pp.61-2

poet's ongoing scrutiny of the public/private boundary in his poetry, although even here the echoes of both Spenser's Bower of Bliss and Books 4 and 9 of Milton's *Paradise Lost* provide both resonance and containment for the sexually charged language[68]. The 'thicket of bliss' would reappear in a poem addressed to Mary two years later.

In 1799, Wordsworth and Dorothy moved to the Lake District, via Somerset, Germany and Durham. They occupied Dove Cottage, Grasmere on 20th December 1799. By 28th December Wordsworth had written 'To M.H.' Having spent the second half of 1799 in Sockburn with the Hutchinsons, Mary was still clearly in his thoughts. And these thoughts are tending towards the domestic, for the poem is, in essence, a celebration of natural domesticity and privacy. The poem is the first of the 'Poems on the Naming of Places' series published in the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* in 1800. In seeking to create a sense of community by writing (in one case by actual inscription) into the landscape the presence of his coterie, Wordsworth wants to achieve a sense of place in the context of those close to him. However, in the very act of creating the 'genius loci' of this landscape, he faces the autobiographical dilemma in a particularly acute form, as he deliberately sets out to author the other, to bring these individuals into the public domain and, therefore, into the public scrutiny that this entails.

In the Advertisement to the group of poems, Wordsworth talks of how certain places can give rise to 'a private and peculiar interest' because of incidents that have happened there. The words 'private and peculiar' are important, as the poet looks to them to counterbalance the act of making his 'Friends' public in the process of writing the poems. At the time of publication, none of the friends is identified (Dorothy is concealed via an alias, Mary is reduced to initials, and Joanna to a

[68] The unguarded sexual reference to 'bliss' recalls Canto xii of book 2 of *The Faerie Queene*, with the languorous description of the Bower of Bliss prior to its destruction by Sir Guyon, and the defeat of Acrasie: 'There she had him now layd a slombering,/In secret shade, after long wanton ioyes' (verse 72, lines 5-6) Spenser, Edmund, *Poetical Works* eds. J.C. Smith and E. De Selincourt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970). It also recalls Milton's description in Book 9 of *Paradise Lost*: 'Her hand he seized, and to a shady bank/Thick overhead with verdant roof embow'red/He led her nothing loth' (Book 9, lines 1037-9) Milton, John, *Poetical Works,* ed., Douglas Bush (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969)

first name only; Coleridge is simply 'My Friend' in 'Point Rash Judgment'*)*. In the case of 'To M.H.' itself, Wordsworth balances intimacy with literary distancing. He is at pains to emphasise the naturalness and seclusion of the 'still nook' (22). It is 'far among the ancient trees' (1). There is no road or man-made path to it. Nature has created its own track through its application of deep shade which 'checks' excessive growth via a gentle self-discipline. The 'firm margin' (9) around the pool gives a sense of security. The natural homeliness of the spot is emphasised by the domestic association of 'slip of lawn' (6) and 'bed of water' (7), while the empathy with Nature, which Wordsworth had given expression to in the 'Nutting' drafts (see chapter 1 above) finds its echo in the reference to 'flocks and herds' (8), which are able to live harmoniously in and gain sustenance from this environment, and which, in turn, reflects the harmony of Mary's spirit. Wordsworth captures this sense of domestic natural harmony in a cluster of images at the end of the poem:

> And if a man should plant his cottage near,
> Should sleep beneath the shelter of its trees,
> And blend its waters with his daily meal,
> He would so love it, that in his death-hour
> Its image would survive among his thoughts: (17-22)

The cottage echoes the 'little nest' and 'humble shed' found in 'Septimi Gades'. Here it is 'planted,' not built. The shelter of the trees and the shelter of the cottage become one. Even eating a prepared daily meal becomes a natural process, blending with surrounding water. The poem is therefore a personal tribute to Mary and her qualities of calm benevolence. It is also quietly sexual: it is the man, who is planting his cottage in the thick umbrage of the shady nook. It is the man who sleeps 'beneath the shelter of the trees' (19). The 'thicket of bliss' (see above), is again evident, and, again, Wordsworth distances the personal connotations by inviting comparisons with Book 4 of *Paradise Lost:*

> Thus talking, hand in hand alone they passed
> On to their blissful bower; it was a place
> Chos'n by the Sovran Planter, when he framed
> All things to man's delightful use……..
> Straight side by side were laid, nor turned, I ween,
> Adam from his fair spouse, nor Eve the rites

Mysterious of connubial love refused;
(Paradise Lost Book 4: 689-692 and 741-743)

The echoes of 'Planter' and 'planted' in the passages above have parallels in 'thick umbrage' ('To M. H.' line 3) and 'the roof/Of thickest covert was inwoven shade' (Book 4:692-3) and 'shady lodge' (Book 4:720). Intimacy only thrives in a context of privacy and seclusion. In prelapsarian Paradise, Adam and Eve may not have been self-conscious, but they were essentially alone together. The poet therefore alleviates his autobiographical anxiety partly by this literary distancing and partly by a tone which is quietly oblique rather than declaratory, as he carefully patrols the public/private border.

The Sockburn hospitality was reciprocated by Wordsworth and Dorothy in early 1800, and Mary spent some six weeks at Dove Cottage from the end of February. It is unlikely that Wordsworth was considering marrying at this time. As he says in a letter to James Losh following the death of his brother, John, in 1805, and referring to the latter's stay at Dove Cottage in 1800, 'this was long before my marriage and when I had no thoughts of marrying'[69]. Whilst there may have been an understanding, there were significant impediments to a marriage, including Wordsworth's lack of money and the Hutchinson family views regarding his suitability as a suitor for Mary. (In the same letter and writing of the same period of 1800, he notes: 'we had no hope about the Lowther debt'). There was also the weighty matter of his previous relationship with Annette, who was still living in France with Caroline.

The biographical evidence suggests that Wordsworth and Mary became engaged during the winter of 1801/2, when the latter was staying at Grasmere. There was no official announcement, but there are hints contained in the correspondence of the time: references to the teasing of Mary, by Molly the servant, mentioned in Dorothy's Journal on 16th November;[70] a letter from Wordsworth to his brother, Richard, on 21st November, asking for a full statement of account;[71] a letter arriving from

[69] Shaver, *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth,* p.563
[70] Mary Moorman ed., *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p.59
[71] Shaver, p.341

France on 21st December;[72] and a note from Coleridge to his wife later in February ('Wordsworth will marry soon after my return')[73]. It is not clear why the decision was taken at this time. The objections and obstacles remained as they had been. In particular, the Lowther debt was still outstanding (there were no positive developments on this front until May/June 1802)[74]. It is possible that political events played a part in the thinking of the couple. On 1st October 1801, the Treaty of London had been signed by representatives of the British and French governments. This was a preliminary to the signing of the Treaty of Amiens in March 1802, which brought a formal, although short-lived, peace between the countries. From October onwards, there was a cessation of hostilities, which would have allowed Wordsworth and Annette to meet for the first time in a decade. As stated above, it is certainly the case that Wordsworth received a letter from France on 21st December 1801, and the likelihood is that this was from Annette, as Wordsworth wrote to her on 26th January 1802.[75] Mary Moorman notes a significant exchange of letters between this date and 5th July.[76] Dorothy's journal also notes that she and Wordsworth 'resolved to see Annette and that Wm should go to Mary'.[77] It is therefore reasonable to deduce that Wordsworth and Annette at the very least needed to make their peace and that Mary gave her blessing for Wordsworth to leave for France. The poet was accompanied by his sister.

The parties met in Calais, which had some convenience for Wordsworth and Dorothy. As a royalist, Annette may have felt safer there. The meeting lasted for most of the month of August 1802, longer than originally anticipated. There is no direct record of the emotions felt by the protagonists. Dorothy's Journal keeps to surface facts, whilst Wordsworth composed a small group of sonnets during the month.[78] As in 'I travelled among unknown men', these poems explore the

[72] Moorman, *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, p.71
[73] Earl Griggs, ed., *Collected Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* quoted in Mary Moorman, *William Wordsworth, A Biography: The Early Years 1770-1803*, p.518
[74] Shaver, *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, p.358f
[75] Moorman, *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth,* p.80
[76] Moorman, *William Wordsworth, A Biography: The Early Years*, p.554 and note
[77] Moorman*, Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth,* p.105
[78] John Worthen notes that Wordsworth wrote around twenty five sonnets between August and October 1802 and that six were connected with Calais (John Worthen, *The Gang: Coleridge, the Hutchinsons & the*

theme of love of the individual and love of country. However, unlike in that poem, where the poet reflects on these themes, having returned home, in these Calais sonnets, Wordsworth meditates on the theme of love of the individual and love of country as a man in a foreign land, albeit for a short period of time. What provides the tension in the poems is the fact that Wordsworth is aware that his betrothed is waiting for him, but that so are his lover and child - that his past and his future have met in the present. Calais becomes both geographically and symbolically a half-way house, but it is a house that does not represent the 'little nest' of domesticity.

Wordsworth seems to seek to release these tensions and to grapple with the autobiographical dilemma by focusing largely on national rather than domestic affections. In addition to the geographical comparison between a subjugated France and an independent England, he is able to bring the historical and the political together by exploring his feelings for the political world around him in a France ruled by Napoleon, and by comparing these feelings to the memory of how he had felt in the first flush of the Revolution a decade earlier. However, complexity is added to the poems, as the historical dimension also includes a comparison between England as it is in 1802 and as it was in the time of Milton.

Wordsworth's poetic output in immediate relation to this time in France is limited to these sonnets. The displacement of his conflicted emotions into the political sphere is his principal means of managing his autobiographical anxiety. Dorothy, as mentioned above, kept to surface detail, describing the day-to-day experience of their environment, particularly noting the effect of light on water during their numerous walks along the shoreline near the town[79]. Such taciturnity on her part should also not be surprising: Wordsworth's mission was clearly a delicate one. He knew that Mary was waiting for him back in the North of England. As has already been noted, Wordsworth was

---

Wordsworths in 1802 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001)), p.330. Mary Moorman in *William Wordsworth, A Biography: the Early Years* includes seven in her group, excluding Worthen's 'Composed upon Westminster Bridge, Sept. 3, 1803' and adding 'On the Extinction of the Venetian Republic' and 'September 1st, 1802'. For the purposes of this discussion, I take the core five Calais sonnets to be: 'Composed by the sea-side, near Calais, August 1802'; 'Calais August, 1802'; 'To a Friend, composed near Calais on the Road leading to Ardres, August 7th, 1802'; 'Calais, August 15th, 1802' and 'It is a beauteous evening, calm and free'.

[79] See, for example, Moorman, *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, p.153

highly aware of the permeability of the boundary between the public and private arenas. In the area of domestic intimacy, Wordsworth was always discreet, often oblique. The examples already discussed, attest to this. Similarly, Dorothy was, above all, loyal to her brother and would have been sensitive to the needs of her future sister-in-law. She would have been acutely aware that her Journal would be available for the close circle at Grasmere to read. Nevertheless both the one non-political sonnet, 'It is a beauteous evening, calm and free', and aspects of the other sonnets, reveal the understandable unease at his situation in France, and an awareness of where his future lies.

Judith Page has noted that, for Wordsworth, the sonnet 'was the perfect meeting ground for private and public thoughts.'[80] He had been drawn to the form again in May 1802 following the reading of Milton's sonnets by Dorothy. He continued to write in this mode on his return to England at the end of the month. A number of the sentiments expressed can be read as having nuanced public and private connotations. Page points to lines 9-11 in 'Calais, August, 1802':

> A seemly reverence may be paid to power;
> But that's a loyal virtue, never sown
> In haste, nor springing with a transient shower. (9-11)

The poet, according to Page, is at pains to emphasise 'lasting and permanent values over transient attachments…..Although explicitly deploring the worship of Napoleon….Wordsworth seems to reflect on his own relationship with Annette Vallon and Caroline, especially if we consider the sexual implications of sowing in haste.'[81] Wordsworth plays out this 'dialectic of liberty and restraint'[82]using the sonnet structure to explore the mutuality of content and form rather like Goethe in his own sonnet, *Natur und Kunst.*[83] He has 'felt the weight of too much liberty'[84] during the early heady days of the Revolution and his passion for Annette. The implication is that in marrying Mary he will provide a resolution to this conflict.

[80] Judith Page, *Wordsworth and the Cultivation of Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p.55
[81] Ibid. p.57
[82] Ibid. p 58
[83] Goethe: 'Natur und Kunst', 1800
[84] Wordsworth, 'Nuns fret not at their convent's narrow room,'(line 13)

In another of this group of sonnets, 'Composed by the Sea-Side, near Calais, August 1802', Wordsworth explores a public love of country, but uses language which hints at the world of private affection. The poem is a meditation on both distance and absence. England is almost visible at the edge of the horizon, but the poet feels detached from it physically while remaining attached mentally and emotionally. In addressing the 'Fair Star of Evening', Wordsworth references Milton[85] . The political and historical dimensions of the potential fall from an English golden age represented by the earlier poet, and the anxiety that this arouses ('with many a fear/For my dear Country'), is blended with a sustained, but tentative image of the star and country (both capitalised in personification throughout) in a union, which in linguistic terms, draws strength from Spenser:

> Fair Star of evening, Splendour of the west,
> Star of my Country! – on the horizon's brink
> Thou hangest, stooping, as might seem, to sink
> On England's bosom; yet well pleased to rest,
> Meanwhile, and be to her a glorious crest (1-5)

Dorothy's journal refers to the likely source of the poem, when she relates the experience of walking with her brother in the evening, and seeing 'far off in the west the Coast of England like a cloud crested with Dover Castle, which was but like the summit of the cloud. The Evening star and the glory of the sky.'[86] Dorothy's Journal also states that she and her brother had read the 'Prothalamion' as recently as April of 1802.[87] However, Lee Johnson is right to point to its companion piece, 'Epithalamion', as providing a likely context for the imagery:[88]

> And the bright euening star with golden creast
> Appeare out of the East.
> Fayre childe of beauty, glorious lampe of loue
> That all the host of heauen in rankes doost lead
> And guydest louers through the nightes dread,
> How chearefully thou lookest from aboue,

[85] See the sonnet, 'London, 1802'
[86] Moorman, *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, p.152. For further comment on Dorothy's and Wordsworth's symbiotic creative relationship, see chapter 3 below.
[87] Moorman*, Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth* p.116
[88] Lee Johnson, *Wordsworth and the Sonnet* – quoted in Page, *Wordsworth and the Cultivation of Women*, p.59

And seemst to laugh atweene thy twinkling light (286-292)

Both Wordsworth and Dorothy incorporate Spenser's 'creast' image, whilst Spenser's 'Fayre childe of beauty', 'bright euening star' and 'laugh atweene thy twinkling light' are mirrored in Wordsworth's 'Fair Star of evening' and 'Bright star! With laughter on thy banners' (line 8). Nevertheless the image of a fulfilled union in the sonnet is more tentative than in the Spenser poem. The star is not at rest on the bosom of the English soil, but is hovering tantalisingly close, yet still just above the horizon. The sense of uncertainty and ambivalence that imbue the poem reflect both a public anxiety about the fate of England and a private anxiety about what Wordsworth has left behind in England and how he is to resolve his past and his future. Mary is out of reach physically, but until he has resolved matters with Annette and his daughter, Spenser's image of nuptial bliss will also remain out of reach. The national and literary dimensions once again create distance from and containment of emotion, whilst providing a resolution for the autobiographical dilemma of potentially authoring the other via the poetical composition of such strongly felt personal experience.

The one overtly personal sonnet, 'It is a beauteous evening, calm and free', also shows Wordsworth both emotionally and geographically at the margins, rather than at the centre of domesticity, as he walks with his daughter near the sea's edge. Wordsworth creates an atmosphere of religious serenity, emphasising quietude and gentleness. Paradoxically, this is reinforced by the distant thunder-like sound of the waves, which points to the natural cyclical order, which the poet has previously evoked in 'I travelled among unknown men' and the other 'Lucy' poems. This adds to, rather than detracts from, the harmony of the occasion. Caroline is addressed in the sestet, not by name, but as 'Dear Child! Dear Girl!' (9). Page here detects 'a sense of distance'[89] as the poet does not address Caroline by name or as his daughter. She compares this with the naming of the brother/sister relationship in 'Tintern Abbey'. However, the circumstances are not comparable. Wordsworth is writing a poem, which, at a minimum, will be seen by Mary and others of his circle,

[89] Page, *Wordsworth and the Cultivation of Women*, p.64

who will have their own sensitivities, and which might well be published in due course. For better or worse, Wordsworth is not going to proclaim that he has an illegitimate daughter to the general public, particularly at a time when the path of his chosen career is so uncertain. He continues to be highly aware of the public/private boundary.

Nevertheless anonymity does not imply lack of affection. Caroline is 'dear' (9) and the atmosphere of religious harmony is extended to include the girl. Her nature is described as 'divine' (11). Again Page detects a profound reluctance of acknowledgement. For her, the line 'Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year' (12) implies not just a 'disavow(al) of patrimony',[90] but a symbolic killing of the child so that she can be with God/Abraham, and therefore no longer require paternal support. This reading not only ignores the poem itself (the line following the reference to Abraham's bosom refers to the child as someone who 'worshippst at the Temple's inner shrine' (13) and who is therefore clearly alive), but also ignores other poems written in the early years of the 1800's. The child is not in God's presence in a traditional Christian sense, but God's presence is in the child. Wordsworth sees in Caroline what he describes in other poems of the period, the emotional wisdom of childhood. This is wisdom 'untroubled by solemn thought' (10); it is an unconscious, spontaneous wisdom, to which adults do not have access ('God being with thee when we know it not' (14)). This theme of the child and childhood had already occupied Wordsworth's recent thoughts, to which poems such as 'My heart leaps up' and 'To H.C.' attest. The theme, and particularly the image of the child on the shore, will be taken up again in 1804 in its most famous manifestation, the 'Ode':

> And see the Children sport upon the shore
> And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore. (170-171)

The child is closer to God than the adult:

> But trailing clouds of glory do we come
> From God who is our home:
> Heaven lies about us in our infancy! (64-66)

[90] Ibid. p.65

As Worthen says[91]:

> The references to the Ode…….may well go back to August in Calais, and the sense he had there of both the unthinking gaiety of the child, and the rumble of the eternal in the ear of the adult.

It is characteristic of Wordsworth's poetry that he is able to transmute the individual into the symbolically general, the child into the Child, as a way of distancing personal emotion.

On 29th August, Wordsworth and Dorothy left Calais. The following day, Dorothy describes in her Journal how they sat:

> upon the Dover Cliffs and looked upon France with many a melancholy and tender thought. We could see the shores almost as plain as if it were but an English lake.[92]

Those 'melancholy and tender thoughts' had already found tentative expression in the 'Calais' sonnets. In them Wordsworth wrestles with the autobiographical dilemma, reducing autobiographical anxiety through displacement into the public, political realm, whilst subtly, indeed poignantly, acknowledging the preciousness of his own child, at the border of his public and private worlds.

[91] John Worthen, *The Gang,* p.233
[92] Moorman, *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth,* p.153

3. Mary as Bride: Mary, Dorothy and the Spousal Sister

As indicated in the previous chapter, the period of the Spring and Summer of 1802 was a time for planning the visit to meet Annette and Caroline and the future wedding of Wordsworth and Mary. The itinerary that led Wordsworth and Dorothy to Calais at the beginning of August 1802 had begun on 9th July with a visit to the Coleridges in Keswick. It continued via the Clarksons at Eusemere and then on to Gallow Hill to see the Hutchinsons, prior to the journey down to London and Dover in order to cross the Channel. Following their sojourn in the French port, they took the opportunity to meet with John Wordsworth in London and returned to Gallow Hill on 24th September, where the wedding was fixed for 4th October.

Dorothy's Journal for the period is a testament to the conflicting emotions she was experiencing, as she envisages drawing to a close the shared life that she and her brother had experienced since the Windy Brow days of 1794. Given their closeness, it is likely that Wordsworth would have been aware of Dorothy's feelings expressed in a letter to Jane Pollard a few days before the wedding: 'I have long loved Mary Hutchinson as a Sister….but, happy as I am, I half dread that concentration of all tender feelings, past, present and future which will come upon me on the wedding morning.' [93] The autobiographical dilemma is therefore again especially acute at this time, as Wordsworth has to chart a delicate course at the boundary between the public and private spheres in respect of both Annette and his daughter, his sister and his wife to be. The visit to Annette has already been considered. This chapter examines three poems, one written just prior to and one, together with its companion piece, immediately following his marriage, poems which are alert to these conflicting emotions as they affect both Dorothy and Mary.

As Wordsworth grapples with his autobiographical anxiety, a number of critics have detected in his writing an unacknowledged repression of sexual feelings for his sister.[94] They call attention, in particular, to Dorothy's highly charged emotions at the time of the wedding: 'I could

[93] Shaver, *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth,* p.377

[94] See, for example, F W Bateman, *Wordsworth – A Re-interpretation* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1954) and Donald Reiman, 'The Poetry of Familiarity' in Reiman et al: *The Evidence of the Imagination* (New York: New York University, 1978)

stand it no longer and threw myself on the bed where I lay in stillness, neither hearing or seeing anything'.[95] A key poem to which they point as evidence is 'Farewell, thou little Nook of Mountain Ground', composed at the end of May and in the early part of June 1802. The poem acknowledges the major, permanent changes that are about to take place in Wordsworth's life, and of those closest to him. Donald Reiman interprets the poem as one which 'exhibits in almost painful detail the emotional struggle William faced.'[96] In Reiman's reading:

> The poem is a farewell to an Eden that, as the tone clearly indicates, can never be recaptured, no matter how wide the world of choice that lies before them.[97]

What this reading fails to take account of is that it is a very carefully and consciously constructed poem, which delicately negotiates a path at the border of public and private worlds in full knowledge of the sensitivities of both Dorothy and Mary. The negotiation in the poem is therefore two-fold: Wordsworth seeks to address and reconcile the conflicting emotions of Dorothy and Mary, whilst, at the same time, being sensitive to the possibility of bringing these conflicting emotions into the public sphere. The poet solves these challenges by addressing neither Dorothy, nor Mary, but the garden itself. In so doing, he is able to effect a careful equilibrium and mutuality of interest. Whilst emphasising the 'we' of brother and sister, who have created the natural sanctuary, the second person 'ye' (ie the garden) helps to mediate between and reconcile the first person (we/I) and the third person (suggesting outsider) Mary:

> We go for One, to whom ye will be dear;
> And she will prize this bower. (25-6)

It is also important to point out that Reiman's analogy of the garden as an Eden is not entirely accurate. Wordsworth and Dorothy were only too well aware of the daily effort involved in making the garden both productive and aesthetically pleasing. The references in the sixth stanza to the garden as being both 'constant' and 'fickle' and to what they acknowledge will be the inevitable result of their absence over the summer ('with thy wild race/ Of weeds and flowers' (46-7)) are

[95] Moorman*, Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth,* p.154
[96] Reiman, *The Evidence of the Imagination*, p.151
[97] Ibid. p.152

testament to a lack of mythologizing. However, in addressing it as 'a sweet Garden-orchard', Wordsworth does draw attention to the Miltonic analogy of *Paradise Lost* book 4, which links back to 'To M.H.' and the 'little nest' of 'Septimi Gades' (the reference to the sparrow's nest in line 55 echoes this poem, as well as 'The Sparrow's Nest'.) But the focus here is not on Adam and Eve as a couple as it is in 'to M.H.'. Rather, the poem consciously draws out other aspects of Milton's description of Paradise, particularly the sense of privacy ('This the place which holds our private store' (line 14)) and security ('we leave these to heaven's care' (line 7)). In this sense, this 'Nook of Mountain Ground' is different from the 'nook' of 'To M.H.'.

Nevertheless, the delicate domestic harmony embodied in the garden cannot be sustained by the garden alone. There will be loss: the emotions associated with the garden prior to Mary's arrival will ineluctably become part of the past for brother and sister, but the garden will provide both a continuing source of beauty and of memory, from which poetry can emerge (the reference again to 'the Sparrow's Nest' at line 55), and, indeed, is emerging in the act of creating the current poem. Mary can now be part of that process of 'emotion recollected in tranquillity'.[98] The poem does not, in the final analysis, echo the end of *Paradise Lost:*

> They hand in hand, with wand'ring steps and slow,
> Through Eden took their solitary way. (Paradise Lost: Book.12: 648-9)

Instead, it reaffirms a return to the garden, which will welcome, not reject, the new arrangement[99]. Following their wedding, Mary will come back with Wordsworth and Dorothy. The use of the strongly indicative 'will' ('and she will love this bower' (line 26)) does not imply compulsion, but is to provide Mary with any further reassurance she may need (she had already spent time at Dove Cottage from soon after Wordsworth and Dorothy moved in). This notion is underscored by line 31 ('She'll come to you; to you herself will wed'), where the mutuality of affection is emphasised by the idea of Mary not marrying the poet, but the garden itself. She will belong to and be with both

[98] Preface to the Second Edition of *Lyrical Ballads* in Hutchinson and de Selincourt, *Poetical Works*, p.740
[99] This contrasts with the reference to the end of *Paradise Lost* in the early lines of *The Prelude,* where Wordsworth emphasises a sense of change, as he emerges into the countryside ('The earth is all before me' (1805: Book.1:15))

brother and sister *and* the garden, with the garden now providing a sanctuary for all three, a reading given peculiar force by the inclusive first person plural 'we' in the very last line:

> And, coming back with Her who will be ours,
> Into thy bosom we again shall creep. (63-4)

The use of personal pronouns to create harmony reaches a natural and domestically inclusive conclusion.

Wordsworth emphasises this inclusiveness through the verse form, which creates a sense of enclosure, as Lucy Newlyn has pointed out. In each stanza the first and last lines rhyme, as do the middle two. 'In reading the poem aloud, the ear is rewarded by the couplet at the centre of each verse, held in place by the ''embrace'' of two alternating rhymes: ABAB/BABA'.[100]

The garden serves one final function in Wordsworth's striving for domestic harmony: the sense of place it embodies can deflect from the change in internal domestic arrangements arising out of the marriage. Rooms in the house had already been exchanged to allow the prospective married couple more space.[101]. The poet subtly moves this focus into the garden, whose 'seclusion deep' (57) allows 'soft slumbers' (59), thereby combining veracity (Wordsworth was liable to be found asleep in the garden from time to time as Dorothy's Journals make clear) and sensitivity, as he focuses on the 'common ground' of the communal garden.

The poem is thus a gentle apotheosis of tact and discretion, driven by both an awareness of the autobiographical dilemma and a need to negotiate between the differing emotional vulnerabilities, to which Dorothy and Mary are potentially exposed. Conflicting feelings emanating from significant domestic events are subsumed into a gentle address to the poet's safe haven. As a result, the balance between public and private realms can be preserved and domestic harmony sustained. Even so, the poem was only finally published in 1815. As in the case of 'Vaudracour and

[100] Lucy Newlyn, *William and Dorothy Wordsworth: All in Each Other* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p.177
[101] See Worthen, *The Gang,* pp.205-6

Julia', the lapse of time reduces autobiographical anxiety and assists in the shoring up of the public/private boundary.

The two sonnets, 'Composed after a Journey across the Hamilton Hills, Yorkshire', written immediately following the Wordsworths' marriage on 4th October 1802[102], and 'These words were utter'd in a pensive mood', composed shortly thereafter (probably by March 1804)[103], have been the subject of critical analysis similar to 'Farewell, thou little Nook of Mountain Ground'. On these readings, a contrast is set up between the soaring pleasures of the forbidden passion the poet feels for his sister, symbolised by the fading glory of the evening sky, and the down-to-earth, mundane pleasures of marriage. The city in the sky, created by the setting sun and the clouds at the horizon, blazes with 'colours beautiful and pure' ('These words were utter'd in a pensive mood' (10)). They produce 'silent rapture' ('Composed after a Journey across the Hamilton Hills, Yorkshire' (12)), but they are essentially ephemeral and chimerical. Wordsworth recognises the beautiful, but unobtainable, and reluctantly moves towards the literally down-to-earth, steady affection represented by Mary:

> The immortal Mind craves objects that endure:
> These cleave to it; from these it cannot roam,
> Nor they from it; their fellowship is secure. ('These words': 12-14)

Reiman, who expounds this view, enlists the support of Coleridge and quotes the latter's correspondence with Crabb Robinson in 1811, when he states that 'Wordsworth is by nature incapable of being in Love'.[104] Whilst rightly acknowledging Coleridge's lack of detachment in this area, Reiman is still able to write:

> …there remains the clear tone of his 'poem on going for Mary' and the two sonnets written about the day he got her, saying he had knowingly sacrificed a romantic joy to cleave to 'secure fellowship' and Man's 'proper food'.[105]

[102] Jared Curtis (ed.), *'Poems in Two Volumes' and Other Poems* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), p.138
[103] Ibid. p.139
[104] Reiman, *The Evidence of the Imagination*, p.161
[105] Ibid. p.162

Reduced to its essentials, this argument rests on the notion that the occasion of his wedding should have afforded Wordsworth the opportunity to write something more conventionally akin to love poetry. As a keen student of English literature, he had a wealth of poetic examples. If the poetry produced lacks feeling, then the relationship it seeks to represent must also lack feeling.

However, the two sonnets can be more fruitfully read in the context of 'Farewell, thou little Nook of Mountain Ground', as further examples of Wordsworth working out poetically the new realities facing his sister, his new wife and himself. 'Composed after a Journey across the Hamilton Hills, Yorkshire' was written immediately following the Wordsworths' wedding, on the journey back to Dove Cottage with Dorothy. 'These words were utter'd in a pensive mood' was composed as a companion piece. The former poem, in some ways, looks back to the old model of 'Dorothy/William joint creation', where she and the poet come across an incident, figure or landscape of interest, they verbally and sometimes vocally compare notes and a poem emerges, often alongside an entry in Dorothy's journals. Dorothy's Journal entry for October describes the same scene in similar language:

> We had not wanted , however, fair prospects before us, as we drove along the flat plain of the high hill, far off from us , in the western sky, we saw shapes of Castles, Ruins……minarets in another quarter, and a round Grecian temple also[106]

The poem is thus an accommodation of Dorothy and his awareness of her continuing emotional needs. The composition of the poem is a demonstration to her that the fundamentals of their creative relationship are unchanged. In this way, it provides continuing evidence of the delicate negotiation being carried out in poetical terms that can be seen in 'Farewell, thou little Nook of Mountain Ground'.

However, at the same time, the poet realises that there is change as well as continuity in his life. His approach, in this case, is not to write Dorothy out of the poem, but to compose a companion poem, which will allow him to explore these changes and the tensions which they create. What is important about 'Composed after a Journey across the Hamilton Hills, Yorkshire' is the *shared*

[106] *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*, p.156

experience (the collective 'we' throughout) of what is essentially a transient transcendence arising out of a natural phenomenon. Nevertheless, whilst all three individuals are able to experience the extraordinary sunset, only Wordsworth and his sister are able to address creatively the experience through their joint literary endeavours. In accommodating Dorothy, Wordsworth recognises a failure of inclusiveness. The companion poem is therefore written to address this, and does so, by acknowledging the superiority of the earthly, the physical and the permanent over the transient and chimerical, in the context of the physicality of his newly married life:

> A contrast and reproach to gross delight
> And life's unspiritual pleasures daily woo'd ('These words' 2-4)

The ephemeral and spiritual beauty turns out to provide no reproach at all, because it can:

> Find in the heart of man no natural home ('These words' 11)

But the second poem can 'right a wrong,' only under the constraints of the maintenance of the boundary between public and private. The physical aspects of his newly married life are shown to have their own strengths which are highly valued, but they are revealed elliptically. He will cease 'disparaging Man's gifts, and proper food' ('These words were utter'd in a pensive mood,' line 8*),* the gifts being his physical masculinity and the 'proper food' looking back to 'To M.H.' and forward to *'*She was a Phantom of Delight':

> A creature not too bright or good
> For human nature's daily food (17-18)

These companion pieces are characteristic of Wordsworth's revisionary practice, a largely conscious process of amendment. There is the awareness, on the poet's part, of a poetic response that *on reflection* is not sufficiently inclusive for the occasion, but the method of rectification here is not to amend the poem, but to write the companion piece. In this case, the companion piece is not prompted by the passage of time and a geographical re-connection (as for example in the three Yarrow poems), but by a need to self-correct an emotional imbalance. However, the subject of the self-correction, the desire to acknowledge the value of physical intimacy in the aftermath of

marriage, can only be implicit, given Wordsworth's need to minimise autobiographical anxiety by managing the border between his private life and the public arena of his (about to be) published poetry. Having 'righted this wrong,' publication of the two poems (effectively bracketed) can proceed. Once more, Wordsworth utilises the tactics of displacement and deflection to promote discretion and support intimacy, whilst exploring the relationships he has with those closest to him in a public context. The poet was never going to be tactless in setting out his married life on the page, but that does not mean that the Wordsworths' marriage lacked passion. The 'love letters' published in 1981[107] clearly show both passion and intimacy. The poet (and Mary) would undoubtedly have hated their coming into the public domain.

[107] Darlington, ed., *The Love Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*

4. Mary as Wife and Mother: Intimacy and 'Inmatecy'

The Wordsworths' married life began in October 1802 and ended on the poet's death in 1850. It began in the cramped surroundings of Town End and ended in the relatively spacious and comfortable surroundings of Rydal Mount. The poet, in the course of his marriage, went from struggling artist to Poet Laureate. The Wordsworths gathered a circle of kith and kin, thereby enhancing domestic ties to the likes of Sara Hutchinson, the Coleridges, as well as the constant of Dorothy. Visitors were frequent, even in the confines of Town End. The search for space for the growing family of five children took them via Allan Bank and the Rectory to Rydal Mount between 1808 and 1813. Correspondence with family and friends reveals an ever-expanding list of guests and visitors, as Wordsworth's fame increased. Continuing exploration of the poet's spousal verse needs to take into account how the poet grappled with this progressive expansion of the domestic arena in which he and his wife led their lives and how it interacted with the growing assurance of a public audience.

The early years of the marriage saw major changes in domestic life with the arrival of the couple's five children, John (June 1803), Dora (August 1804), Thomas (June 1806), Catherine (September 1808) and William (May 1810). However, there was also much that stayed the same, particularly during the Town End period, which did not end until 1808. The poetry of this period includes the completion of the 1805 *Prelude* and the lyrics, which make up a considerable portion of the 1807 *Poems, in Two Volumes*. These look back as much as they look forward, with their themes of the natural world and its interactivity with the human mind, particularly through the agency of memory.

The key 'Mary' poem of this period is 'She was a Phantom of Delight', composed between October 1803 and March 1804, a poem that Wordsworth acknowledged was about his wife in the Fenwick notes, where he says:

It was written from my heart, as is sufficiently obvious.[108]

As one of the few self-declared 'Mary' poems, it has had to bear a considerable critical burden, either specifically or as part of his corpus of 'female' work. Reiman, once more, fails to detect passion, perceiving merely the domesticity of 'household motions' (line 13).[109] Wallace Douglas talks of Mary (and Dorothy) being used as objects to satisfy the poet's narcissistic needs;[110] whilst Marlon Ross reads the female as always providing only a means to satisfy Wordsworth's need for self-identity[111]. In an interesting reading of the poem, Camille Paglia notes that the 'more emotionally central, the vaguer and more numinous'[112] is the poet's presentation of females, without considering the extent to which this is deliberate.

An earlier part of the same Fenwick note has received less attention. In it Wordsworth states that 'the germ of this Poem was four lines composed as a part of the verses on the Highland Girl', a poem written roughly in the same period.[113] The poems thus share more than the same metre and couplet rhyming. Certainly these lines from 'To a Highland Girl' resonate with 'She was a Phantom of Delight':

> Such forms as from their covert peep
> When earthly cares are laid asleep
> Yet dream and vision as thou art,
> I bless thee with a human heart. (13-16)

In fact, both poems share an affinity with each other in respect of their exploration of the problematics of the authoring of the other. They continue Wordsworth's preoccupation with the autobiographical dilemma, as he seeks to map out the territory between public and private spheres. Here, however, he addresses the problem directly by treating it as the principal theme of each piece.

---

[108] Jared Curtis, ed., *The Fenwick Notes* (Bristol Classical Press, 1993), p.13. See also Jared Curtis, ed., *'Poems in Two Volumes', and Other Poems 1800-1807* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), p.404
[109] Reiman, *The Evidence of the Imagination,* p.159
[110] Wallace Douglas, *Wordsworth: The Construction of a Personality* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1968), p.176
[111] Marlon Ross, 'Romantic Quest and Conquest' in Anne K. Mellor (ed.), *Romanticism and Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), pp.26-51
[112] Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae*, p.306
[113] Curtis, ed., *The Fenwick Notes,* p.192

In arriving at different conclusions, each poem sheds light, both on the other and on the relationship between husband and wife, the author and the authored.

Susan J Wolfson is right to raise doubts about the image of Wordsworth as 'the sure, secure figure of logocentric performance and egocentric confidence'.[114] Both poems under consideration here ponder the potential violation of personal autonomy and privacy, in the course of being authored. In 'To a Highland Girl', the poet seeks to contain, and even obtain the girl by reinventing her as a family member:

> Thy elder brother I would be
> Thy father, anything to thee (59-60)

But he is compelled to recognise that, like a force of Nature, he will not be able to contain her:

> Thou art to me but as a wave
> Of the wild sea; (53-54)

He makes a claim on her, but the conditional tenses are evidence that this claim will fail:

> ……..And I would have
> Some claim upon thee, if I could (54-55)

In the end the poet is grateful for the experience and for the power of memory, through which he will be able to recreate the experience to support his future emotional life:

> Joy have I had; and going hence
> I bear away my recompence (62-63)

He therefore releases her from his futile attempts to contain her:

> Nor am I loth, though pleased at heart
> Sweet Highland Girl! from Thee to part. (70-71)

The poem therefore speaks to both the tensions inherent in the dichotomy between self-projection and the autonomy of the other, and to the process of seeking to reconcile them in the context of authoring that other. By releasing the Highland Girl, Wordsworth also releases himself from any responsibility he feels for seeking to claim her. However, paradoxically, Wordsworth also lets go of

[114] Susan J. Wolfson, 'Individual in Community' in Anne K. Mellor, *Romanticism and Feminism,* p.146

her through the very act of writing, and then publishing the poem, in which her part in Wordsworth's experience will be contained for as long as the poem is read. But despite the lengthy description of the girl, amounting to some seventy five lines, and the precision of the location ('At Inversneyde, upon Loch Lomond'), what is contained in the poem is not the individual, but another example of the Wordsworthian figure on the border between solitude and relationship (see note 64 above) in a landscape at once emblematic (capitalised nouns) and personal:

> As fair before me shall behold,
> As I do now, the Cabin small
> The Lake, the Bay, the Waterfall;
> And Thee, the Spirit of them all (72-75)

In writing 'She was a Phantom of Delight', in addition to an awareness of the responsibility for authoring the other, Wordsworth has to grapple with the autobiographical dilemma, since unlike the Highland Girl, Mary is at the centre of his private domestic life. At the beginning of the poem, Mary, like the Highland Girl, is a spiritual creature, remote and ethereal, and beyond Wordsworth's claiming. However, in contrast to 'To a Highland Girl', 'She was a Phantom of Delight' is structured in dimensions of both time and space. Originally, Mary is seen at a distance in both temporal and spatial terms, and is admired as a spirit and entirely part of Nature:

> A lovely apparition sent
> To be a moment's ornament (3-4)

Over time, as the poet comes to know her better, she becomes an individual, who is now part of his domestic environment:

> And now I see with eye serene
> The very pulse of the machine. (21-22)

Critically, however, and unlike the Highland Girl, she has sacrificed herself as a force of Nature to join Wordsworth as a 'Traveller betwixt life and death' (24). But in re-introducing the 'Spirit still' (29) at the end of the poem, Wordsworth recognises that he will not be able to contain her entirely. Nor does he wish to. She will have a part independent and part interdependent life as a loved member of a close domestic circle. There is no regret in this recognition of partial independence. The poem

expresses, above all, the poet's gratitude for the sacrifice that Mary has made, a creature of the spiritual world, who has committed to walk the earth with her husband:

> A creature not too bright or good
> For human nature's daily food (17-18)

These are lines, which link back to the physical affection in evidence in 'To M.H.' and 'These words were utter'd in a pensive mood'. Wordsworth alludes to the physical aspects of marriage, but, again, does so in an oblique fashion. However, Mary is at the absolute centre of the piece. There is no egotism on display, only a deep humility at the heart of the poem.

Nevertheless, Wordsworth balances affection with a certain distancing. Mary is not named in the poem. The focus remains on her moral qualities, rather than on her physical ones, and Wordsworth remains keen to emphasise her spiritual aspects ('With something of an angel light' (30)). Camille Paglia has written that:

> the less a woman is loved by Wordsworth, the more clearly she is seen. Wordsworth's ardour dematerialises or seraphicises the beloved. She ceases to be an object, much less a sex object[115]

Paglia queries whether 'he fears his own aggressive eye', the perceived 'claiming' of the other in the course of authoring it. The analysis of these two poems shows that Wordsworth is more wary of containing the female presence than he is usually given credit for. What Paglia misses in her reading is that the poet is concerned about not just the 'claiming' of the other, but the exposure of the other, particularly with respect to those individuals who are close to him. Wordsworth continually scrutinises the boundary between the public arena of published poetry and the private world of the individuals in his domestic circle. The tactics of deflection and displacement inevitably lead to distance, but not, in the case of Mary, to dematerialisation. She is a 'perfect Woman' ready to eat 'human nature's daily food'. As they journey through life together, they will meet the all too human

[115] Paglia, *Sexual Personae*, p.310. Paglia has much that is interesting to say about the 'feminine' aspects of Wordsworth's personality and poetry, in addition to her exploration of Wordsworth's depiction of those females closest to him. Aston Nichols has also explored these themes in relation to Dorothy and *The Prelude*. See *The Revolutionary 'I'*, chapter 5.

attributes of 'praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles' (20) with the equally human 'Endurance, foresight, strength and skill' (26).

The period from 1803 to 1810 saw the birth of the Wordsworths' five children. Life became ever more hectic at Town End. Sara Hutchinson joined Dorothy in making it her permanent abode. The Coleridges were initially frequent visitors, with their two sons being regular Sunday residents. There were occasional breaks, taken both together and separately, involving friends and other family members. Intimacy, in such cramped and crowded circumstances, must have been difficult to sustain. It is perhaps therefore no surprise that separation provides a catalyst for the outpouring of affection contained in the private 'love letters' discovered in 1977.

As previously stated in chapter 2, these letters were written during July and August 1810, when Wordsworth was at Coleorton with Sir George Beaumont and Mary at home, and May and June 1812, when Wordsworth was in London and Mary visiting her brother's farm at Hindwell. These letters clearly give the lie to the biographical and critical arguments regarding the assumed insipidity of the relationship between the poet and his wife. They support the notion that the feelings that Wordsworth and his wife had for each other were passionate and could be frankly expressed. Indeed, it could be argued that the separation of husband and wife generates this need to express personal affection, which is unnecessary when they are physically together. However, this need can only be expressed when they can be sure that the correspondence can be kept confidentially between them. Most of the letters they wrote and received were 'public' letters, often containing text from more than one writer, and were meant to be read by more than the addressee. In the context of letters they knew would be private, they felt free to give rein to their feelings for each other:

> How I long, (again must I say) to be with thee; every hour of absence now is a grievous loss, because we have been parted sufficiently to feel how profoundly in soul and body we love each other; and to be taught what a sublime treasure we possess in each others (sic) love. (Wordsworth to Mary).[116]

[116] Darlington, *The Love Letters of William and Mary Wordsworth*, p.229 (letter dated 3-4th June 1812)

Even then, there is occasional hesitation:

> ..Oh how much have I to say that I am not able and how much that I am unwilling to trust to paper[117]. (Wordsworth to Mary)

No doubt Wordsworth would also have been delighted, though not surprised, to hear Mary's generous sympathy for Annette and Caroline:

> God bless her (Caroline). I should love her dearly and divide my last with her were it needful – God bless them both and thee my best beloved my soul and every nerve is full of thee.[118]

In a tragic irony, these exchanges of letters were brought to a conclusion by news of the death of the Wordsworths' daughter, Catherine on 4th June 1812, while both Wordsworth and his wife were absent from home, with the final few letters being sent in ignorance of the event. Following Catherine's death, Wordsworth wrote to his brother, Christopher:

> I have but a poor account to give of Mary…..she is yet little recovered from the deplorable dejection in which I found her. Her health has suffered: but I clearly see that neither thought nor religion nor the endeavours of friends, can at once quiet a heart that has been disturbed by such an affliction[119]

The further blow of Thomas's death six months' later, on 1st December 1812, seems to have affected Wordsworth even more profoundly. In a letter to Southey immediately after the death, he wrote:

> My wife bears the loss of her Child with striking fortitude…Miss Hutchinson also supports her sorrow as ought to be done. For myself dear Southey I dare not say in what state of mind I am; I loved the Boy with the utmost love of which my soul is capable, and he is taken from me[120]

In the period starting in early 1813 and prior to its publication in 1814, Wordsworth wrote some additional lines for Book III of *The Excursion* (331ff), which provide the personal background to the Solitary's disillusionment, which, in turn, gives rise to the title to this book: 'Despondency'. There can be little doubt that the poet's traumatic personal experience forms the basis for these additional lines: the happily married couple are blessed with a son and a daughter:

---

[117] Ibid. p.128 (letter dated 2nd May 1812)
[118] Ibid. p.239 (letter dated 6th June 1812)
[119] Mary Moorman and Alan Hill (ed.), *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Middle Years: Part II, 1812-1820* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), p.26
[120] Ibid. p.51

The twain within our happy cottage born,
Inmates and heirs of our united love;
Graced mutually by difference of sex (589-591)

However, in the poem, within seven years, both of the children die in quick succession (Thomas was six when he died):

…….Our blooming girl,
Caught in the gripe of death, with such brief time
To struggle in as scarcely would allow
Her cheek to change its colour, was conveyed
From us to regions inaccessible;
Where height, or depth, admits not the approach
Of living Man, though longing to pursue.
-With even as brief a warning- and how soon
With what short interval of time between,
I tremble yet to think of – our last prop,
Our happy life's only remaining stay-
The Brother followed; and was seen no more! (638-649)

The immediacy of the lines describing the impact of the deaths of the children on the relationship between husband and wife is particularly striking:

The eminence on which her spirit stood,
Mine was unable to attain. Immense
The space that severed us. (668-670)

This clearly reflects Wordsworth's own experience. For the 'paradoxically self-exhibiting yet highly reserved poet'[121] these lines are remarkable for the erosion they display of the boundary between public and private worlds, a boundary, to which, as we have seen, Wordsworth is consistently alert. This compulsion to author the self, even in these highly charged circumstances, by working through his grief via poetic creation and re-creation, is reminiscent of the immediate aftermath of the death of his brother, John, although the poetry written at that time is largely lost:

[121] Stephen Gill, 'Affinities Preserved: Poetic Self-Reference in Wordsworth' in *Studies in Romanticism*, Volume 24 no. 4, p.542

> I composed much, but it is all lost except a few lines, as it came from me in such a torrent that I was unable to remember it; I could not hold the pen myself, and the subject was such, that I could not employ Mrs. Wordsworth or my Sister as my amanuensis[122]

The compulsion to self-author forces Wordsworth to seek to deal with the autobiographical anxiety, which results from the porosity of the public/private border inevitably created in authoring the other, in this case, Mary. The full extent of his efforts to shore up this boundary can be seen by examining DCMS 71, which contains the additional lines for Book III. What this examination shows is that Wordsworth omits from these an additional 126 lines, which focus even more extensively on Mary[123]. The poet's approach is therefore composed of a mixture of deflection and omission. As regards the published lines, there are significant differences in the life stories: the cottage is in Devon, not in the Lake District; the period of the action is pre- not post the French Revolution, and, of course, Mary does not actually die. The viewpoint of the Solitary also provides some emotional distancing. In the lines directly describing the wife (659-688), there are three powerfully direct lines:

> Into a gulph obscure of silent grief,
> And keen heart-anguish – of itself ashamed,
> Yet obstinately cherishing itself: (684-686)

However, the bulk of the lines describe the process of her decline rather than her emotional state, and there are elements of Augustan diction '(Dimness oe'r this clear Luminary crept/Insensibly' (679)) that help to distance the raw feelings of loss. The movement between husband and wife is the opposite of that created in 'She was a Phantom of Delight'. Whereas that poem is structured as a movement from the spiritual to the physical, *The Excursion* extract is structured as a movement from the physically solid to wraith-like spirit:

> And, so consumed, She melted from my arms:
> And left me, on this earth, disconsolate. (687-688)

[122] Shaver, *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth,* p.586
[123] 'Materials towards *The Excursion'* in Carl Ketcham, ed., *Wordsworth, Shorter Poems, 1807-1820* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989) p.113

The loss is felt by the Solitary, whist the grieving wife is silenced. This silence helps to restore the public/private boundary and to contain the powerful feelings of grief. But the impulse on the part of the poet is not to repress the individual (Mary), but to resolve the autobiographical dilemma by protecting the individual through writing her out of the poem.

This is not to deny the immediacy of these lines. In respect of his feelings for his dead children, Wordsworth is barely able to contain his grief within the framework of the blank verse, and the poetry is all the more moving for the knowledge of the autobiographical events. In relation to Mary and her 'keen heart-anguish', the death of the Solitary's wife is primarily a kind of protective device. Nevertheless, in these lines, Wordsworth comes as close as anywhere in his oeuvre to producing poetry which Mary would have been uncomfortable reading - uncomfortable in that *The Excursion* was scheduled to be published at last**.** The degree of this discomfort can be seen in the drafting of DCMS 71. Bushell, Butler and Jaye[124] demonstrate the impact that the writing of these lines has on Wordsworth, Mary and Dorothy. In reviewing DCMS 71, they note that it 'bears the heavy weight of Wordsworth's first response to this family tragedy.'[125] As the new lines are added, the material becomes 'increasingly fragmentary.'[126]The analysis shows how, as the Solitary's domestic tragedy unfolds, the handwriting of, first, Mary, and then, Dorothy falls away, leaving Wordsworth himself to complete the difficult task of writing down the verse, as neither of his two key amanuenses is able to bring herself to face such an ordeal. The rawness of the emotion in the immediate aftermath of the deaths is clearly too great. Whether Mary felt unable to continue, or whether Wordsworth did not ask her to, is not known, but the lines are haunted by grief, and, perhaps, guilt. The process reflects the verse written after John's death, which Wordsworth was unable to give to either Dorothy or Mary for transcribing purposes. Ultimately the poet is challenged by autobiographical anxiety to address the permeability of the public/private boundary, but he does this consciously, not to give priority to his own emotions, but to safeguard his wife's.

[124] Bushell, Butler and Jaye, ed., *The Excursion,* p.448
[125] Ibid., p.449
[126] Ibid., p.449

Wordsworth's use of omission to protect the private/public boundary is evidenced, as stated above, in DCMS 71. In 'Materials toward *The Excursion'*. Carl Ketcham sets out 133 lines, only seven of which eventually found their way into *The Excursion* itself. These additional lines, dealing with the Solitary's description of the loss of their daughter and the parents' mourning, did, however, provide the material for two further published works, 'Characteristics of a Child three Years old' and 'Maternal Grief' (1842). The latter poem, running to over eighty lines, was written about Mary, as Wordsworth confirms in the *Fenwick Notes:*[127]

> This was in part an overflow from the Solitary's description of his own and his wife's feelings upon the decease of their children, and I will venture to add *for private notice solely* is faithfully set forth from my wife's feelings and habits after the loss of our two children within half a year of each other.

The italics represent a typical example of Wordsworth's keen awareness of the public/private boundary.

'Maternal Grief' opens powerfully in the first person:

> Departed Child! I could forget thee once
> Though at my bosom nursed; (1-2)

before switching after thirteen lines to the third person, ostensibly that of the Solitary, but in reality, more of an objective narrator distanced from the suffering of the Solitary in *The Excursion*. In the poem, as the opening line states, only the daughter has died and the focus of the piece is the re-building of the relationship between the mother and the remaining child. The parents' relationship is not explored. In changing the poem's circumstances to one of a single child's death, Wordsworth once more provides distance from autobiographical details. The remaining child is also 'her twin brother' (39). The central image is that of the boy as a 'scared bird encouraged to renew/a broken intercourse' (57-58) after the child is unable to understand or respond to the mother's anguish. Eventually their joint loss brings them together:

[127] Curtis, ed., *Fenwick Notes*, p.67

readily they join
In walks whose boundary is the lost one's grave
Which he with flowers hath planted (67-69)

Moving from the despair of the opening lines:

and how
Shall I admit that nothing can restore
What one short sigh so easily removed? (8-10)

the poem's ending is consolatory rather than bitter, as the mother is reconciled to life in the company of her remaining child.

The omission of eighty lines of poetry relating primarily to Mary, provides her with privacy at a tragic time in her life. The boundary is preserved. However, the poem becomes effectively another companion piece, which is eventually published in 1842, when time has allowed the rawness of the emotions felt in 1812 to be ameliorated. Although it bears comparison with, and is usually bracketed with, other poems written about female sufferers, its source is closer to home than the likes of the Female Vagrant and Ruth. Ultimately it is a poem in praise of Mary's emotional resilience and maternal affection. It reads like the righting of a wrong. He had doubted Mary and he should have shown faith. He had failed to respect the boundary between public and private, resulting from a desire to work through his own grief and to provide a motive for the Solitary, as part of *The Excursion's* redemption structure. In an act of selfishness, he had caused distress. Thirty years after the events which drove this example of self-authoring, Wordsworth seeks, through publication, to bring closure to any pain he has caused in authoring the other.

That the Wordsworths were able to regain their mental and emotional equilibrium after these bitter events is a testament to the strength of their marriage and the domestic bonds of their kith and kin. Wordsworth, Mary and Sara Hutchinson set off for a tour of Scotland in August 1814, a holiday that Wordsworth knew that Mary needed. Sara was able to report to Mary Hutchinson, wife of her brother, Tom, that:

> dearest Mary is much improved by her journey; she truly enjoys herself; and William is happy that the journey has accomplished this his chief aim.[128]

A crisis had been overcome, and Wordsworth did not wait for thirty years to publish an acknowledgement of the debt he owed to his wife. By the time he comes to write the Dedication to *The White Doe of Rylstone* in April 1815, he feels secure enough as regards his and Mary's feelings to refer, albeit briefly (and again obliquely), to the difficulties they have experienced:

> We by a lamentable change were taught
> That ''bliss with Mortal man may not abide''
> How nearly joy and sorrow are allied! (23-25)

These tribulations have been worked through:

> Heaven's breathing influence failed not to bestow
> A timely promise of unlooked for fruit (31-31)

He chooses to acknowledge his wife's 'tender heart', and, in dedicating the poem to her, boldly (in the sense of placing her unusually in the limelight) emphasises the 'female patience winning firm repose' that links both Mary and Emily Norton**.** In unambiguously naming her in his poetry for the first time (and only then in the final published version of the Dedication), there is a sense that Wordsworth is becoming more comfortable with his public poetic self. *The Collected Works* (1815) and *The White Doe of Rylstone* were being published. He has moved to Rydal Mount, and has dealt with a terrible domestic tragedy. He can therefore tentatively bring his wife into the public arena. The boundary between public and private has become more permeable, and at least as far as this poem is concerned, Mary has become a public person. Wordsworth has therefore deliberately brought the world of his putative public readership together with the private world of his marriage in a way that is unusual in his poetry to this point in his career.

Mary's presence becomes more spectral again in The River Duddon sonnet sequence composed between 1802 and 1819, with the bulk of the poems written between November 1818 and March 1819. As a meditation on time, it is structured in three timescales: a single day from

[128] Kathleen Coburn ed., *The Letters of Sara Hutchinson 1800-1835* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1954), p.77

morning to evening; the life of a human being; and the sweep of human history, as evidenced by physical man-made landmarks in the area. Wordsworth's association with the river was enduring. As he says in the relevant extracts from the Fenwick Notes,[129] he first grew to know it in his schoolboy days, before visiting it while a student at Cambridge and subsequently with various family members on a number of occasions.

The final paragraph in his Fenwick Notes entry reads:

I have many affecting remembrances connected with this stream. Those I forbear to mention, especially things that occurred on its banks during the later part of that visit to the seaside of which the former part is detailed in my epistle to Sir George Beaumont.

This is characteristically oblique and points again to the way in which domestic intimacy is handled in the context of the public/private boundary. The visit that Wordsworth refers to took place in the summer of 1811, when he and Mary took Thomas and Catherine to the coast to seek the benefit of sea bathing. Wordsworth writes to Beaumont on 28th August, when he describes aspects of his visit, before advising him that 'Mrs W. and I return in a few days to Grasmere'.[130] Moorman rightly sees the above Fenwick Notes extract as associated with this journey home when 'he and Mary had returned on foot up the Duddon, leaving the children to go in the pony-cart with Sally Youdell'.[131] Dorothy had previously written to Catherine Clarkson that on 31st July, 'William, Mary, Thomas, Catherine and one of the maids left me to go to the sea-side'.[132]Mary herself refers to the visit in her own letter to her sister, Sara, when she says 'upon the whole we were very unlucky in respect to weather at the seaside – yet we enjoyed it thoroughly.'[133]

Whilst the sonnet sequence represents a general meditation on time, Sonnets xxiv and xxv present a more focused examination of solitude and the power of absence, as Wordsworth muses on journeys to the river made both alone and in the company of Mary. Sonnet xxiv ('The Resting

[129] Curtis ed., *The Fenwick Notes*, p.30
[130] Mary Moorman ed., *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Middle Years: Part 1*, p.507. See also ibid. p.499 and Burton, *The Letters of Mary Wordsworth* p.7
[131] Mary Moorman, *William Wordsworth, A Biography: The Later Years, 1808 – 1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), p.376
[132] Ibid. p.499
[133] Burton, p.7

Place') sets the daily time as the afternoon ('mid-noon is past'(line 1)), and, at the age of nearly 50, Wordsworth recognises that, in terms of man's journey, this is beyond the prime of life. There is a sense of isolation in the poem, to which the hot, airless afternoon contributes ('No zephyr breathes, no cloud its shadow throws' (line 2)). The resting place described, a confined, shady spot ('this Nook' (line 5)), carries overtones of both Spenser's Bower of Bliss and Miltons's 'blissful bower' (*Paradise Lost* 4 line 690), and recalls the language of 'Farewell thou little Nook of Mountain Ground', 'To M.H.' and 'Nutting'. The 'Nook' with 'woodbine hung and straggling weed' (line 5) is quietly luxuriant, the 'tempting recess' (line 6) quietly sexual, with the use of the word 'sultry' to describe 'the sultry mead' (line 1) supporting this reading. However, the 'Nook' gains further complexity from its connotations of a tomb:

> Half grot, half arbour, proffers to enclose
> Body and mind, from molestation freed,
> In narrow compass – narrow as itself (7-9)

The poet, in recognising the geography of his life journey, suffers from a stasis, which grows out of both a sense of isolation and a sense of a journey, which will, sooner or later, come to an end.

It is at this point that Wordsworth seeks to conjure his wife to his side and to 'this dim retreat'. Sonnet xxv recalls 'She was a Phantom of Delight', with Mary being transported by and being associated with the spirit world of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*. Also, as in that poem, Mary will achieve a physicality, which will turn the 'Nook' into the 'blissful bower' of Milton, rather than Spenser's Bower of Bliss, while her companionship will be a source of deep pleasure, as they complete life's journey together. The two sonnets therefore work as a single poem. Their success arises from the tension between achieved solitude and the absence of the other. As so often, Wordsworth works obliquely to praise the physical dimension of the couple's relationship, while preserving the public/private boundary between published poetry and domestic protagonists.

The period from 1815 to 1820, culminating in the publication of the River Duddon sequence, saw Wordsworth take stock of his past in terms of both published and unpublished poetry.[134] The first category-based collected works appeared in 1815, followed by the belated appearance of 'The White Doe of Rylstone' in the same year, followed again in 1819 by two older unpublished pieces, 'Peter Bell' and 'Benjamin the Waggoner'. A second edition of *The Excursion,* published in 1820, all point to a desire on the part of the poet to tidy up his relationship with his past in poetical terms, as far as autobiographical anxiety will allow. *The Prelude* will not be looked at again for a decade.

Together with the slackening of the self-authoring and self-authorising imperative arising from this accommodation with his poetic past, the confidence engendered by the success of the River Duddon sequence leads to the development of a more 'public voice', as Wordsworth becomes more sure of his place as one of the celebrated poets of the age. It is a voice, which indicates that his sense of isolation from his poetic audience has been reduced, that he has indeed created 'the taste, by which he is to be enjoyed' (see note 22 above). The poetry written at this time frequently orientates itself towards public rather than private history (for example, the 'Ecclesiastical Sonnets' as opposed to *The Prelude*) and sees a shift from personal self-authorisation towards an identification with traditional national institutions such as the Church. However, the use of a more public voice entails the risk of Wordsworth's domestic circle being drawn into the public arena, and, in fact, Wordsworth wrote a number of short poems, including sonnets, about Mary between 1820 and 1845. All of these poems publicly acknowledge the important role she has played in his life. Discretion has been replaced by open expressions of affection, but the poet is still concerned to ensure that the more public persona of Mary is treated sympathetically and that his relationship with her is fully understood. A key way of achieving this, for Wordsworth, is to revert to the companion piece approach noted in Chapters 2 and 3. This approach can take the form both of pieces written close together in terms of time, such as 'Composed after a Journey across the Hamilton Hills, Yorkshire' and 'These words were utter'd in a pensive mood', and decades apart. This

[134] See, in particular, Stephen Gill, *Wordsworth's Revisitings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), Chapter 4

companion piece structure again allows tensions to be explored and perceived wrongs righted as part of the poet's continual revisiting of his work to set the record straight.

'Let other Bards of Angels Sing' was written in the Spring or Summer of 1824 and was included in 'Poems Founded on the Affections'. The poem next to it in the collected works sequence is 'Yes! thou art fair, yet be not moved', composed over twenty years later. Wordsworth is here at pains to emphasise the companion piece nature of the latter piece at the expense of pure chronology. The formal title of 'Let other Bards of Angels sing' is 'To ---------- ' and recalls 'To M. H.', Mary's entry in the 'Poems on the Naming of Places'. 'Let other Bards of Angels sing' deals with the topic of the subjective response to beauty. Unlike the perfect creatures praised by other poets, Wordsworth recognises that though 'The world denies that Thou art fair' (line 9), the poet sees and understands that:

> True beauty dwells in deep retreats
> Whose veil is unremoved
> Till heart with heart in concord beats
> And the lover is beloved. (9-12)

Wordsworth stresses the deepening of mutual love in privacy and seclusion, with the 'veil' recalling the 'veiled yet not unseen' words of 'Septimi Gades' (see Chapter 2 above). Again the poet wishes to emphasise the private nature of the relationship with his wife.

'Yes, thou art fair, yet be not moved' was written in the second half of 1845, over twenty years after its companion piece. The poem reveals Wordsworth's habit of retrospection and revisiting. It also reveals a lingering sense of autobiographical anxiety, as he looks back over the decades to 'Let other Bards of Angels sing' and feels that he needs to gently right what he now perceives to be a small wrong. His 'Dear Maid' <u>is</u> fair. There is always an element of subjectivity in love, but Mary should:

> Be pleased that nature made thee fit
> To feed my heart's devotion (9-10)

Memory and ageing form key components of the two 'Portrait' sonnets, 'To a Painter' and 'On the Same Subject'. In the Editor's Notes to *The Fenwick Notes*[135], Curtis comments that Margaret Gillies painted miniatures of Wordsworth, Mary, their daughter, Dora and Isabella Fenwick in the autumn of 1839 at Rydal Mount. Writing to his daughter in April 1840, shortly after the poems had been completed, Wordsworth states:

> Your mother tells me she shrinks from copies being spread of those sonnets: she does not wish one on any account to be given to Miss Gillies, for that, without blame to Miss G., would be like advertising them. I assure you her modesty and humblemindedness were so much shocked that I doubt if she had more pleasure than pain from these compositions though I never poured out anything more truly from the heart.[136]

The response is both characteristic of Mary's desire for privacy, of which, as we have seen, her husband is acutely aware, and her reluctance to be the centre of attention, set off by the inevitable pleasure created by her husband's clearly stated affection.

The two sonnets act as companion pieces to each other in the same way as 'Let other Bards of Angels Sing' and 'Yes! Thou are fair but be not moved'. In the second sonnet, 'On the Same Subject,' the poet quietly corrects what he now perceives to be his misjudgement. In 'To a Painter' Wordsworth seeks both to praise the portrait produced and to point out what it lacks, and what the artist could never portray, the memory that the poet has of his wife as she was:

> Who, yielding not to changes Time has made,
> By the habitual light of memory see
> Eyes unbedimmed, see bloom that cannot fade (3-5)

In looking at the finished poem, Wordsworth sees that his error is to set up the contrast between the past and the present without stressing the continuity of memory. At the same time, he recognises that instead of rejecting the poem, he can add complexity to it through the composition of the companion piece. In 'On the Same Subject', the poet acknowledges that he has erred:

> 'O, my Beloved! I have done thee wrong' (4)

Mary's moral qualities provide a constant thread that links past and present:

---

[135] Curtis, ed., The Fenwick Notes, p.185

[136] Alan G. Hill ed., *Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Later Years: 1821-1853,* III p.756 and note; IV p.59 and note (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982 and 1988)

…the old day was welcome as the young,
As welcome, and as beautiful – in sooth
More beautiful, as being a thing more holy;
Thanks to thy virtues, to the eternal youth
Of all thy goodness, never melancholy (8-12)

Whilst praising her 'large heart' (line 13) and humility, he acknowledges his enduring love and accepts the integrity of memory to create not a contrast between past and present, but 'one vision, future, present, past' (line 14).

'Forth from a jutting ridge' provides a final example of the way in which Mary has moved into the public sphere in Wordsworth's later poetry, as the poet's autobiographical anxiety recedes. Its genesis is described in a letter to George Gordon in June 1845,[137] where, rejecting the notion of taking on a subject suggested by another party, he says:

It was only a few days ago that I was able to put into Verse the matter of a short Poem which had been in my mind with a determination and a strong desire to write upon it for more than thirty years.

The poem becomes the ultimate entry into the group of 'Poems on the Naming of Places'. It is a piece haunted by that gap of 'more than thirty years'. Rather than simply celebrating the pleasures experienced by the two sisters in their climbing to the twin rocks at Bainriggs, Wordsworth has to acknowledge that they have been parted by 'Death's cold hand' (line 16) (Sara died in 1835). Addressing the 'kindred pinnacles' (line 18), he asks them to accept 'MARY'S humble, SARAH'S silent claim' (line 24), so that they can act as tokens of lives lived and experiences shared 'from age to age in blended memory' (line 26). At the end of his poetic career, Wordsworth can fully acknowledge his wife, who is now not only named, but is named in capital letters, effectively inscribed in the public domain, echoing the inscribing of Joanna's name on the eponymous rock in 'To Joanna'.

As one of the very last poems that Wordsworth wrote, it shows the poet coming full circle, completing a poetic journey back home to Town End, where nearly half a century earlier, he had composed 'To MH', the first of the 'Poems on the Naming of Places'. In the course of that journey,

[137] Hill ed., *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Later Years,* IV p.680

the elusive ‘M H’ has become the publicly acknowledged wife of the poet laureate, as Wordsworth’s autobiographical anxiety abates.

Mary finally has a full presence in the public arena. Nevertheless, it is a presence consciously and heavily scrutinised, a presence created out of the habit of the continual inspection of the public/private boundary, the habit of a poetical lifetime.

5. Conclusion

In a letter to George Beaumont written in May 1805,[138] Wordsworth, alluding to *The Prelude*, then in progress, says:

> It will not be much less than 9,000 lines, not hundred, but thousand lines, long; an alarming length! And a thing unprecedented in Literary history that a man should talk so much about himself.

Wordsworth's decision to make himself the subject of a long poem, whilst it had significant consequences for the future of poetry,[139]was influenced at the time by both personal circumstances and wider developments in the structure of literary production and dissemination. The poet was driven to seek self-authorisation and authority in his poetry as a way of coming to terms with the growing divide between writer and audience, as networks of patronage were replaced by a more populous, but fragmented reading public. Wordsworth relied upon a small number of individuals to support him in his early writing career, but was acutely aware of, and indeed felt the need to connect with, this fragmented reading public, particularly as he removed himself from the literary centre of London to reside in Dorset, Somerset, Germany and, finally, the Lake District.

At the same time, Wordsworth was conscious of the personal burden placed upon him by Coleridge to be the great philosopher poet. The writing of *The Prelude*, in this context, becomes an act of attempted self-affirmation, with all of the potential for uncertainty that this implies.[140]As the poet says in the same letter:

> I began the work because I was unprepared to treat any more arduous subject and diffident of my own powers. Here at least I hoped that to a certain degree I should be sure of succeeding, as I had nothing to do but describe what I had felt and thought, therefore could not easily be bewildered.

For these reasons, as Robert Rehder says, 'Wordsworth chooses himself'.[141]

However in 'talking so much about himself', in acknowledging the autobiographical impulse, the poet remains conscious of a countervailing force, a desire to preserve the boundary between

[138] Shaver, *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, p.586
[139] See, for example, Nichols, *The Revolutionary 'I'*, p.73
[140] See Kearns, *Coleridge, Wordsworth and Romantic Autobiography*, especially chapter 2
[141] Robert Rehder, *Wordsworth and the Beginnings of Modern Poetry* (London: Croom Helm, 1981), p.44

public and private spheres. The poet is aware that in the authoring of the self, he risks authoring the other. The poet experiences this autobiographical dilemma as what I have termed the anxiety of autobiography, and it is an anxiety that has a direct impact upon the way in which he presents his poetry. This impact reveals itself in a number of ways, most remarkably in the failure to publish in his own lifetime what was to become his most influential long poem. This draconian silencing of the self and, by implication, those close to the poet, can also be seen in individual examples such as the poetical treatment of Dorothy in the 'Nutting' drafts. Elsewhere Wordsworth displaces his personal history into parallel histories, as in his relationship with Annette Vallon and its shadow histories of Vaudracour and Julia and the du Fosse family.

In considering the poetry that concerns itself with Mary Hutchinson (Wordsworth), critics have paid too much attention to the autobiographical imperative and not enough to the anxiety of autobiography. The result has been both to fail to recognise when the relationship is being addressed poetically and, where there is recognition, too much of a focus on the apparent mundaneness at the heart of this sixty year relationship. The paradox at the core of much of Wordsworth's writing is that the urge to protect the boundary between his private, domestic life and the public life of his published poetry is as strong as the autobiographical impulse to make his life public, given his need to forge a poetic identity at a time when the relationship between writer and reading public was in a state of flux. In seeking to effect a reconciliation between these two conflicting impulses, Wordsworth adopts a number of writing strategies. The lines from Book 3 of *The Excursion* see the displacement of the trauma of the death of two of the Wordsworths' children into the parallel history of the Solitary and his wife. The Calais sonnets see the displacement of the poet's anxieties largely into the political sphere; a number of poems such as 'Septimi Gades' make use of classical or literary allusion to 'place' and contain emotion; elsewhere, in poems such as 'to MH', Wordsworth employs elliptical language to express his feelings for his wife, particularly in the area of their physical relationship. Throughout his career, the poet also wrote companion pieces

such as the two Portrait sonnets in order quietly to explore tensions and provide a more rounded view of the relationship he has with Mary.

The overall effect of these writing strategies is to create an initial impression of affection at a distance. However, a closer analysis reveals a relationship given poetic shape with far more depth and breadth than is usually recognised. It is also a relationship that towards the end of his career the poet can more readily acknowledge publicly, as his autobiographical anxiety abates in the wake of acceptance by the wider reading public and a consequent slackening of the autobiographical impulse.

Nevertheless, Wordsworth carefully patrolled the border between public and private spheres throughout his writing career. In his private correspondence, he was able to write: 'O Mary I love you with a passion of love which grows till I tremble to think of its strength'.[142] His sense of autobiographical anxiety would not have permitted him to present their relationship in this manner in the public arena. However, throughout his published and unpublished verse, he was at pains to acknowledge both her qualities and the centrality of her life to his. In a final tribute to her at the conclusion of the 1850 version of *The Prelude* (and probably drafted in the 1830's), this acknowledgement is forged in a life lived together and couched in characteristic terms:

> She came, no more a phantom to adorn
> A moment, but an inmate of the heart,
> And yet a spirit, there for me enshrined
> To penetrate the lofty and the low;
> Even as one essence of pervading light
> Shines in the brightness of ten thousand stars,
> And the meek worm that feeds her lonely lamp
> Couched in the dewy grass. (1850: 14: 268-275)

[142] Darlington, *The Love Letters of William and Mary Wordsworth,* p.62

Bibliography

Abrams, M. H., *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953)

Barker, Juliet*, Wordsworth: A Life* (London: Viking, 2000)

Baron, Michael*, Language and Relationship in Wordsworth's Writing* (London: Longman, 1995)

Bateson, F. W., *Wordsworth: A Re-interpretation* (London: Longmans, 1956)

Bennett, Andrew, ed., *William Wordsworth in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015)

Wordsworth Writing (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007)

Bialostosky, Don H., *Wordsworth, Dialogics, and the Practice of Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992)

Bloom, Harold, *The Visionary Company* (London: Faber and Faber, 1961)

Burton, Mary E., *The One Wordsworth* (Hamden, Connecticut: The Shoe String Press, 1972)

Byrne, Joseph E., 'Worlds Trodden and Untrodden: Political Disillusionment, Literary Displacement, and the Conflicted Publicity of British Romanticism' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Maryland, 2013)

Clarke, C. C., *Romantic Paradox* (Westport: Greenport Press, 1979)

Coleridge, Samuel Taylor and Wordsworth, William, *Lyrical Ballads* 1798 and 1800 ed. Michael Gamer, and Dahlia Porter (Toronto: Broadview Press, 2008)

Curtis, Jared, ed., *The Fenwick Notes of William Wordsworth* (London: Bristol Classic Press, 1993)

Danby, John F., *The Simple Wordsworth* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960)

Davie, Donald*, Purity of Diction in English Verse* and *Articulate Energy* (London: Penguin, 1992)

Davies, Hugh Sykes*, Wordsworth and the Worth of Words* ed. John Kerrigan and Jonathan Wordsworth (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986)

Douglas, Wallace, *Wordsworth: The Construction of a Personality* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1968)

Durrant, Geoffrey, *Wordsworth and the Great System* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970)

Eakin, Paul John, *Fictions in Autobiography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985)

Fay, Elizabeth A., *Becoming Wordsworthian* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995)

Ferguson, Frances, *Wordsworth: Language as Counter-Spirit* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977)

Fox, Lorcan Francis, 'Public Figure or Family Man: Wordsworth's Constructions of Poetic Authority' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, 1993)

Fry, Paul, *Wordsworth and the Poetry of what we are* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008)

Fulford, Tim*, Romanticism and Masculinity* (London: Macmillan Press, 1999)

Gill, Stephen, *William Wordsworth: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990)

Wordsworth's Revisitings (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011)

'Affinities Preserved: Poetic Self-Reference in Wordsworth' *Studies in Romanticism* vol. 24 no. 4 (Winter 1985) pp.531-549

Gravil, Richard and Robinson, Daniel ed., *The Oxford Handbook of William Wordsworth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015)

Grob, Alan, *The Philosophic Mind* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1973)

Habermas, Jurgen, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992)

Hess, Scott David, 'Authoring the Self: Self-representation and the Print Market in British Poetry from Pope through Wordsworth' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Harvard University, 2000)

Horace, *The Odes and Carmen Saeculare of Horace* (London: George Bell and Sons, 1882)

Hutchinson, Sara, *Letters of Sara Hutchinson 1800-1835* ed. Kathleen Coburn (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954)

Jacobus, Mary, *Romanticism, Writing and Sexual Difference* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989)

James, Henry, *The Portrait of a Lady* (London: Penguin, 1971)

Johnston, Kenneth R., *The Hidden Wordsworth: Poet, Lover, Rebel, Spy* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998)

Jones, John, *The Egotistical Sublime* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1970)

Jones, Mark, *The 'Lucy Poems': A Case Study in Literary Knowledge* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995)

Jones, Rodney P., *Wordsworth and the Duddon* (self-published, 2014)

Kearns, Sheila M., *Coleridge, Wordsworth and Romantic Autobiography* (Madison: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1995)

Khan, Jalal Uddu, 'Wordsworth's Revision and Publication of ''Vaudracour and Julia'' and ''Mary Queen of Scots''' *Studies in Philology* vol. 99 no. 3 (Summer 2002) pp.312-335

Klancher, Jon P., *The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1792-1832* (Madison: the University of Wisconsin Press, 1987)

Knight, G. Wilson, *The Starlit Dome: Studies in the Poetry of Vision* (London: Methuen, 1959)

Komisaruk, Adam, 'Private Persons: Class and the Construction of Sexuality in British Romanticism' (unpublished doctoral thesis University of California Los Angeles, 1998)

Lawrence, Berta, *Coleridge and Wordsworth in Somerset* (David and Charles: Newton Abbot, 1970)

Legouis, Emile, *William Wordsworth and Annette Vallon* (London: J. M. Dent, 1922)

Liu, Alan, *Wordsworth, The Sense of History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989)

Lucy Newlyn, 'The Wordsworths' Poetics of Hospitality' *Essays in Criticism* Volume 66(1), 2016 pp. 1-28

McFarland, Thomas, *William Wordsworth: Intensity and Achievement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992)

McSweeney, Kerry, *The Language of the Senses* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998)

Mellor, Anne K. ed., *Romanticism and Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988)

Milton, John, *Poetical Works* ed. Douglas Bush (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969)

Moorman, Mary, *William Wordsworth, A Biography: The Early Years, 1770-1803* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957)

William Wordsworth, A Biography: The Later Years, 1803-1850 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965)

'Wordsworth and his Children' in Jonathan Wordsworth ed., *Bicentenary Wordsworth Studies* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970)

Murray Roger N., 'The Blending of Perception' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Iowa, 1965)

Newlyn, Lucy, *William and Dorothy Wordsworth: All in Each Other* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)

Nichols, Ashton, *The Revolutionary 'I'* (London: Macmillan Press, 1998)

Page, Judith W., *Wordsworth and the Cultivation of Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994)

Paglia Camille, *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson* (London: Penguin, 1992)

Perkins, David, *Wordsworth and the Poetry of Sincerity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1964)

Rehder, Robert, *Wordsworth and the Beginnings of Modern Poetry* (London: Croom Hill, 1981)

Reiman, Donald H., 'Poetry of Familiarity: Wordsworth, Dorothy and Mary Hutchinson' in Reiman et al. ed. *The Evidence of the Imagination* (New York: New York University Press, 1978)

Robinson, Henry Crabb, *On Books and Their Writers* ed. Edith Morley (London: J. M. Dent, 1938) vol.1

Scrimgeour, J. D., 'Provisional Selves: Audience and the autobiographical act' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Indiana University, 1994)

Sheats, Paul D., *The Making of Wordsworth's Poetry, 1785-1798* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1973)

Simpson, David, *Irony and Authority in Romantic Poetry* (London: The Macmillan Press, 1979)

Spenser, Edmund, *Poetical Works* ed. J.C. Smith and E. De Selincourt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970)

Thomas, Keith G., *Wordsworth & Philosophy* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1989)

Thomson, Douglass H., 'Wordsworth's Lucy of ''Nutting''' *Studies in Romanticism* (Summer 1979) pp.287-298

Ward, J. P., *Wordsworth's Language of Men* (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1984)

Williams, Raymond, *The Long Revolution* (London: Pelican, 1965)

Woof, Pamela, *William, Mary and Dorothy: The Wordsworths' Continental Tour of 1820* (Wordsworth Trust, Grasmere, 2008)

Wordsworth, Dorothy*, Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth* ed. Mary Moorman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971)

Wordsworth, Jonathan, 'My Dearest Love: Letters of William and Mary Wordsworth, 1810' The Wordsworth Circle Fall 1981 pp.210 and 273-278

Wordsworth, Mary*, The Letters of Mary Wordsworth 1800-1855* ed. Mary E. Burton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958)

'Travel Journal, 11th July to 23rd December, 1820', DCMS 92 (Dove Cottage Archive)

'Transcripts from Scraps', DCMS 167 (Dove Cottage Archive)

Wordsworth, William and Dorothy, *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Early Years, 1787-1805* ed. Ernest De Selincourt, 2nd edn., rev. Chester L. Shaver (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967)

The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Middle Years: Part 1, 1806-1811, ed. Ernest De Selincourt, 2nd edn., rev. Mary Moorman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969)

The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Middle Years: Part 2, 1812-1820, ed. Ernest De Selincourt, 2nd edn., rev. Mary Moorman and Alan G. Hill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970)

The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Later Years, ed. Ernest De Selincourt, 2nd edn., 4 vols., rev. Alan G. Hill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978-88)

Wordsworth, William and Mary, *The Love Letters of William and Mary Wordsworth* ed. Beth Darlington (London: Chatto and Windus, 1982)

Wordsworth, William, *'Lyrical Ballads' and Other Poems, 1797-1800*, ed. James Butler and Karen Green (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992)

'*Poems, in Two Volumes' and Other Poems, 1800-1807* ed. Jared Curtis (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983)

Early Poems and Fragments, 1785-1797, ed. Carol Landon and Jared Curtis (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997)

Home at Grasmere, ed. Beth Darlington (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977)

Last Poems, 1821-1850, ed. Jared Curtis (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999)

Poetical Works, ed. Thomas Hutchinson and Ernest De Selincourt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969)

Shorter Poems, 1807-1820, ed. Carl H. Ketcham (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989)

Sonnet Series and itinerary Poems, 1820-1845, ed. Geoffrey Jackson (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004)

The Excursion, ed. Sally Bushell, James Butler and Michael C. Jaye (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007)

The Prelude: A Parallel Text ed. J. C. Maxwell (London: Penguin, 1971)

The White Doe of Rylstone, ed. Kristine Dugas (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988)

The Thirteen Book Prelude Volume 2, ed. Mark Reed (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1991)

Worthen, John, *The Gang: Coleridge, The Hutchinsons & the Wordsworths in 1802* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001)

The Life of William Wordsworth (Chichester: John Wiley & sons, 2014)